

JAMES FALLOWS ON CLIPPER-CHIP FEAR / HAYDN'S FORGOTTEN OPERAS

The Atlantic Monthly

JUNE 1994

THE WILD EAST

Organized
crime
has strangled
business in
Russia—and is
now reaching
for the nation's
nuclear
stockpile



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BY JOURNALIST M. HERSH

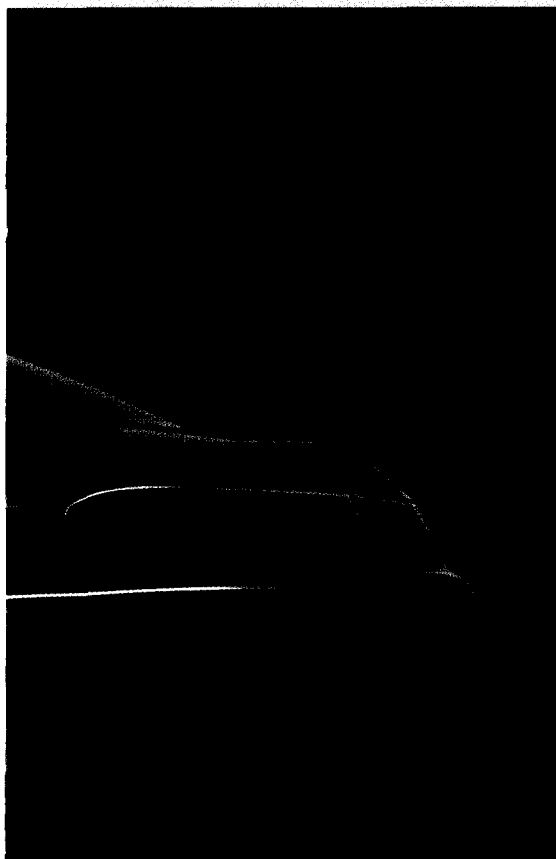
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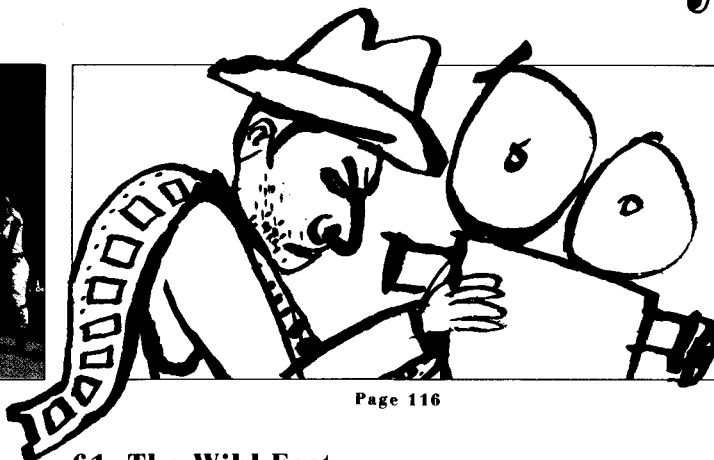
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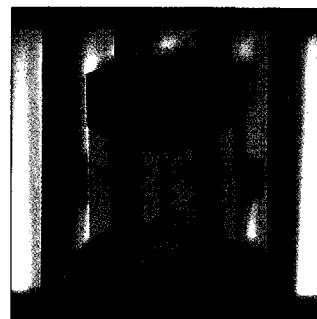
 **LINCOLN**
What A Luxury Car Should Be



Page 54



Page 116



Page 102

REPORTS

24 Notes & Comment: Busy, Busy, Busy

America has an association, society, fraternity, guild, or club for everything under the sun. A sampler.

by Cullen Murphy

32 Society: A Bold Proposal on Immigration

Should California's illegal aliens be allowed to vote in local elections? Is it in fact possible to seal the U.S. border? The two questions may be related.

by Jack Miles

46 Technology: Open Secrets

The Clinton Administration has angered the high-tech community with two measures that could affect the privacy of electronic communications. The anger is misplaced.

by James Fallows

HUMOR, FICTION, & POETRY

72 Look Here

A poem
by Pamela Alexander

88 Morse Code

A short story
by Susan Power

61 The Wild East

Intelligence reports from a variety of sources suggest that it may be only a matter of time before the Russian mafia, which now controls most of Russia's economy, gets its hands on nuclear materials—if it has not done so already.

by Seymour M. Hersh

102 Federal Offense

In this second part of her report on crime our correspondent considers the push for more prisons and more mandatory sentencing—proposals driven by ideology rather than by evidence that either will have much impact on crime. Politicians, the author observes, "profess to believe what they know is not true."

by Wendy Kaminer



110 Jigsaw Puzzle in Pregnancy

A poem
by Christopher Jane
Corkery

115 Erosion

A drawing
by Guy Billout

BOOKS

129 2034

The Rise of the Meritocracy,
by Michael Young
by Nicholas Lemann

136 Brief Reviews

by Phoebe-Lou Adams

ARTS & LEISURE

54 Travel: Play and Replay

With its theater festival, Stratford, Ontario, is full of sound and fury—and of many miscellaneous pleasures besides.

by Gene Burns

116 Movies:

The Homeric Power of Peckinpah's Violence

A rating dispute threatens the release of the director's cut of *The Wild Bunch*—a piece of art, the author writes, whose power can't be shrugged off or explained away.

by Michael Sragow

123 Music:

In Mozart's Shadow

Haydn's operas have been undeservedly forgotten. Now available on compact disc, they prove to be a treasure chest of invention and beauty.

by Matthew Gurewitsch

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

4 745 Boylston Street

4 Contributors

6 Letters

20 The June Almanac

139 The Puzzler

by Emily Cox and
Henry Rathvon

140 Word Watch

by Anne H. Soukhanov

Cover art
by Pierre Fortin

*After three years of
begging and two karats,
Josie says, "Yes." Promise
wedding of the century.*

*You talk her out of
"Gone With the Wind"
theme wedding.*

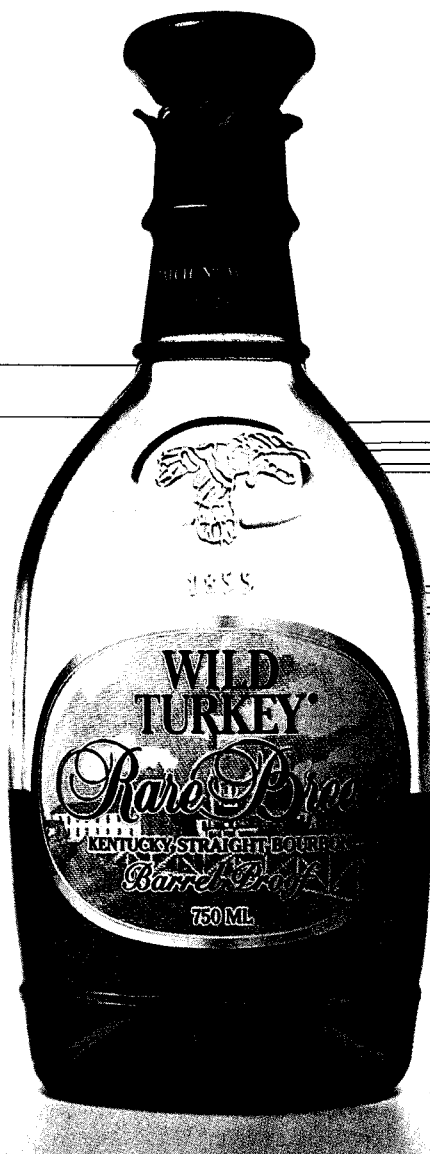
*Manage to cut guest
list to 1,500 of your
parents' closest friends.*

Bachelor party.

(Day after bachelor party.)

*Future father-in-law
agrees to pay for
everything if you invite
all of his Muskrat Lodge
brothers.*

You elope.



It's rare. Sip it accordingly.





745 BOYLSTON STREET

JAMES FALLOWS, *The Atlantic Monthly's* Washington editor, recently published *Looking at the Sun*, his definitive explanation of why Japanese corporate strategy and economic thought are so different from ours. Beginning last November we published three articles drawn from the book. *Looking at the Sun* has already attracted the kind of national attention due a work that changes the way people think about an important and complex subject.

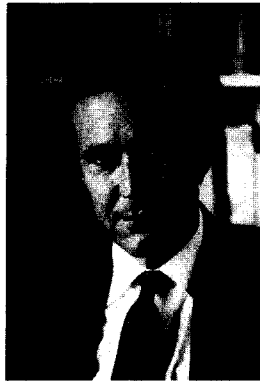
Ever since Fallows, his wife, and their two sons returned to Washington from the Far East, in 1989, those of us at headquarters have had to wean ourselves from the wonderful epistolary travel accounts that arrived electronically during the four years the Fallows family lived in Asia. Fallows continued to make frequent trips there, spending fourteen of his first twenty-four months "home" traveling to many of the countries he had not had the opportunity to come to know while living in Asia—places like Thailand and Korea, whose economies have shown sustained vitality and rapid growth. These countries, too, are taken up in *Looking at the Sun*.

Fallows will continue to keep an eye on Asia, but as he explains, it is time to move on to other things. Like most writers,

he says, he began pursuing an issue—in his case, the seeming juggernaut of Japanese competition—in order to decide for himself how he should think about it. Eight years later he knows. "I suppose there was a moment when I found myself in the same interview or after-dinner discussion in Tokyo that I'd had thirty-one times before," he says, "and I thought I didn't need to have it a thirty-second time."

What next? Readers of *The Atlantic* know that Fallows has long enjoyed learning about computers—about both the industry he has observed closely and the machines he has mastered to an extent that many *Atlantic* staff members envy. Indeed, Fallows is something of a technical-support person of last resort. His next book, about computers, will combine reports from a turbulent business with the kind of funny and practical advice he has offered from time to time in our pages.

After that Fallows will probably try to persuade his family that it would be fun to live somewhere else again. The places that arouse his interest now are California, where he grew up, and Europe, particularly Germany and its neighboring countries. Wherever Fallows goes, we hope it prompts a resumption of his Baedeker-by-modern. —THE EDITORS



MARTIN CORNEL

CONTRIBUTORS

Pamela Alexander ("Look Here") is the author of two books of poetry, *Navigable Waterways* (1985) and *Commonwealth of Wings* (1991).

Gene Burns ("Play and Replay") hosts *The Gene Burns Program*, broadcast nationally by the WOR Radio Network in New York City. He has been a talk-show host, news director, news anchor, commentator, and operations manager at radio stations in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston.

Christopher Jane Corkery ("Jigsaw Puzzle in Pregnancy") teaches the writing of poetry at Harvard Summer School. She is the author of *Blessing* (1985).

James Fallows ("Open Secrets") is *The Atlantic's* Washington editor and the author of *National Defense* (1981) and *More Like Us* (1989). His new book, *Looking at the Sun*, was published in April.

Pierre Fortin (cover art) is an artist and illustrator based in Toronto. He has received

numerous awards for his work from the *American Illustrators Annual*, the Art Directors Club of Toronto, *Communication Arts*, and *Applied Arts*. Fortin's commercial illustrations have appeared in *Sports Illustrated* and *Mondo 2000*, among other magazines.

Matthew Gurewitsch ("In Mozart's Shadow") is the host of Conductors in Conversation, a live interview series at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York.

Seymour M. Hersh ("The Wild East") is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*. He received a Pulitzer Prize in 1970 for having exposed the massacre at My Lai, South Vietnam. From 1972 to 1979 Hersh was a reporter for *The New York Times*. His books include *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (1983), *The Target Is Destroyed: What Happened to Flight 007 and What America Knew About It* (1986), and *The Samson Option* (1991).

Wendy Kaminer ("Federal Offense") is a lawyer and a social critic and the author of *A Fearful Freedom: Women's Flight From Equality* (1990) and *I'm Dysfunction-*

al, You're Dysfunctional (1992). Kaminer is at work on a book about criminal justice.

Nicholas Lemann ("2034") is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*. He is the author of *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1991).

Jack Miles ("A Bold Proposal on Immigration") is a book columnist and editorial writer at the *Los Angeles Times*. He is completing a book on literary criticism and the Bible for which he was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in 1991.

Susan Power ("Morse Code") is a fellow at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College. Her stories have appeared in *Ploughshares* and *Story*. Her novel, *The Grass Dancer*, will be published this August by G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Michael Sragow ("The Homeric Power of Peckinpah's Violence") writes reviews for *The New Yorker's* "Movies in Brief" section. He edited *Produced and Abandoned: The Best Films You've Never Seen* (1990).



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LETTERS

Gun Control

Daniel D. Polsby's argument ("The False Promise of Gun Control," March *Atlantic*), that criminals would be deterred from their crimes by the fact of a heavily armed citizenry, is entirely specious. A heavily armed citizenry would not help the children mowed down while playing in the schoolyard, or the victim of a domestic fight in which tempers rise and the first thing to hand is a loaded gun. Nor would it help the 18,000 adults and children who use guns to commit suicide every year, or prevent the thousands of fatal accidents, many involving children playing with their parents' improperly stored firearms. As for the idea that uniformed police officers are protected from attack because they carry handguns, Polsby is perhaps unaware that seventy-two police officers were shot to death in this country last year. In Britain killings of police officers are almost unheard of, even though the officers do not carry guns.

Polsby cites the fact that both Britain and Switzerland have low numbers of gun-related killings, despite Switzerland's heavily armed population and Britain's stringent gun control, in an attempt to prove that gun control is not a factor. But the low numbers should not be allowed to mask the fact that Switzerland's gun-murder rate is nearly thirty times Britain's, despite the fact that Switzerland has an unemployment rate below one percent (as opposed to 12 percent in Britain) and virtually none of the inner-city blight and hopelessness experienced in Britain. Polsby makes the point that British criminals prefer crimes of stealth over crimes of intimidation, and therefore do not value guns—but surely this is a reverse causation of the type of which he accuses Arthur Kellermann: possession of a gun is what gives American criminals the courage to confront their victims.

Most significant, Polsby fails to point out that the firepower that he suggests

would deter crime would also deter behaviors in law-abiding citizens: speaking out on a controversial topic, for example, or, indeed, any of the myriad activities in which we could risk upsetting a fellow citizen. Americans pride themselves on living in a free society, but when the way you live your life is constrained by the threat of the firepower around you, then de facto you are not free, no matter what the Constitution may guarantee.

Jane Edwards
Eureka, Calif.

A Department of Justice survey shows that nearly 30 percent of criminals say they bought their guns from a dealer. In states whose laws require background checks and waiting periods, tens of thousands of criminals have been prevented from buying their weapons over the counter. Since 1989 California, Florida, Virginia, and Maryland have blocked more than 47,000 purchases by those proscribed from buying handguns. And in early March the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms reported that the Brady law, on its first day in effect, screened out nearly 10 percent of all applicants.

Sarah Brady
Handgun Control, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

"The False Promise of Gun Control" was a delightful surprise. I wouldn't change a word, but I would like to mention another aspect of the matter.

The first attempt at gun control in America occurred on April 18, 1775, in Lexington, Massachusetts, and from all reports it was a limited success at best. Up to that moment Americans and their government had been unhappy with each other over a number of issues, but in that act the government crossed the line between governing and ruling.

Much later Jefferson and Madison both wrote about the provision in the Bill of Rights on the right to keep and bear arms.

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They said separately that the purpose of the Second Amendment was to give the people the upper hand if the government they had created ever turned tyrannical.

They had just survived a revolution in which they had learned that even a benign government could become an enemy without warning, but that an armed population could contain its best effort to rule them without their consent. That's why the Second Amendment acknowledges—not creates—a right of the people to keep and bear arms completely separate from any right of any government. I think it has worked.

Robert Jahn
Indianapolis, Ind.

Daniel Polsby assumes the impossibility of achieving a permanent federal register of firearms owners and ballistic characteristics of registered weapons, and hints that legislation going less far in the direction of truly effective control of firearms would contravene the Second Amendment. As to the latter issue, the Second Amendment was framed in the light of experience with militia units, virtually the only military organizations utilized by the new nation up to that time. Hence the wording, beginning, "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state. . . ." National weapons registration would enhance, not detract from, the operational efficiency and regulation of militias within states. One important respect of such enhancement would lie in giving militia units, whether or not they were federalized, some idea of the numbers and types of weapons that might be encountered in resisting insurrection or armed protest.

The efficacy of legislation requiring registration of firearms does not lie in deterring persons from committing acts of violence. If potential sentences to death or long-term imprisonment do not deter, then no lesser threatened punishment will do so. Instead, where a registered weapon has been used and is recovered, the identification of the perpetrator with the offense is facilitated; and where a suspect is found to be in possession of an unregistered or falsely registered weapon, punishment can be inflicted for the weapons offense irrespective of establishing beyond reasonable doubt the commission of any other offense. It is legend that certainty of punishment affords a better de-

terrent than does severity, which would tend to influence potential criminals to avoid employment of weapons of which registration is required.

Homer A. Walkup
Alexandria, Va.

A quick reading of the Federalist Papers immediately disabuses one of the belief, expressed by Daniel Polsby, that the Second Amendment means that "the right to bear arms was to be enjoyed by everyone, not just a militia." In Number 29 Alexander Hamilton explained exactly what was meant by the Second Amendment, and the reasoning still makes good sense today. The right to bear arms was limited to a well-trained militia "of moderate size," officered and regulated by the several states, but equipped by the federal government, Hamilton wrote. The arms themselves were to be provided by the government, so as to be uniform. Why limit the right to a well-regulated militia? Our forefathers feared standing armies, especially those belonging to their own government. "If standing armies are dangerous to liberty," Hamilton wrote, "the militia ought to take away the inducement to such unfriendly institutions." And, "It requires no skill in war to discern that uniformity in the organization and discipline of the militia would [have] most beneficial effects." Furthermore, Hamilton wrote, it would be impractical and "mischievous" as well as "futile" and "injurious" to try to give every citizen the proper equipment and keep him trained to a level capable of fighting a professional army. "To acquire the degree of perfection [required] would be a real grievance to the people, and a serious public inconvenience and loss. It would form an annual deduction from the productive labour of the country to an amount which . . . would not fall far short of the whole expense of the [civil governments] of all the states. . . . It would not be long endured." As for the rest of the people, the yeomanry, it would be enough to assemble them once or twice a year and make sure that they had the proper government-issue weapons.

Polsby claims, "It is not morally tenable—nor, for that matter, is it even practical—to insist that police officers. . . retain a monopoly on legal firearms. It is needless to fear giving honest men and

women the training and equipment to make it possible for them to take back their own streets." The question is, How much training and equipment would this require? Alexander Hamilton and good sense would say that they needed training up to the professional crime-fighting level, and equal or better weaponry. The crime of choice nowadays is opening fire with an automatic weapon in law offices, trains, and fast-food places. Would our armed citizens have SWAT-team training for this? Perhaps sharpshooting? Surely these people would need as much training as the National Guard, a well-regulated militia, if they were to stand half a chance against heavily armed predatory criminals.

Anyway, how well does our totally untrained and variously armed but honest citizenry handle its firearms? How many of those homicides mentioned in the studies are deaths of predatory criminals brought down by straight-shooting honest citizens? Hardly any, one guesses. Who *are* most homicide victims? Not vicious criminals but friends and relatives of someone wielding a gun. People are four times as likely to be shot and killed by a family member or friend who owns a gun as they are to be shot and killed by a stranger.

Ironically, the day I read Polsby's article, a gun owner in Los Angeles, a collector, was shot and killed with one of his own assault rifles—the possession of which was, by the way, illegal here in California. The gun owner had a dispute with his seventeen-year-old son, over playing rock music. The son shot his father, a policewoman who had answered a domestic-disturbance call, and finally himself. Three dead among our honest gun-carrying citizenry. I recall a recent happening here involving an honest gun owner whose pit bull had bitten a child. When a policeman came with a court order to impound the dog for observation, the honest gun owner started firing. Result: one dead policeman, one dead honest gun owner, and one dead honest gun owner's father, who got caught in the crossfire. These are just two episodes off the top of my head. I'm sure the statistical data are much more telling. Just how many gun deaths in the United States are caused by predatory criminals?

Kaa Byington
San Francisco, Calif.

*The Air Force has
the Stealth.*

Music has Sinatra.

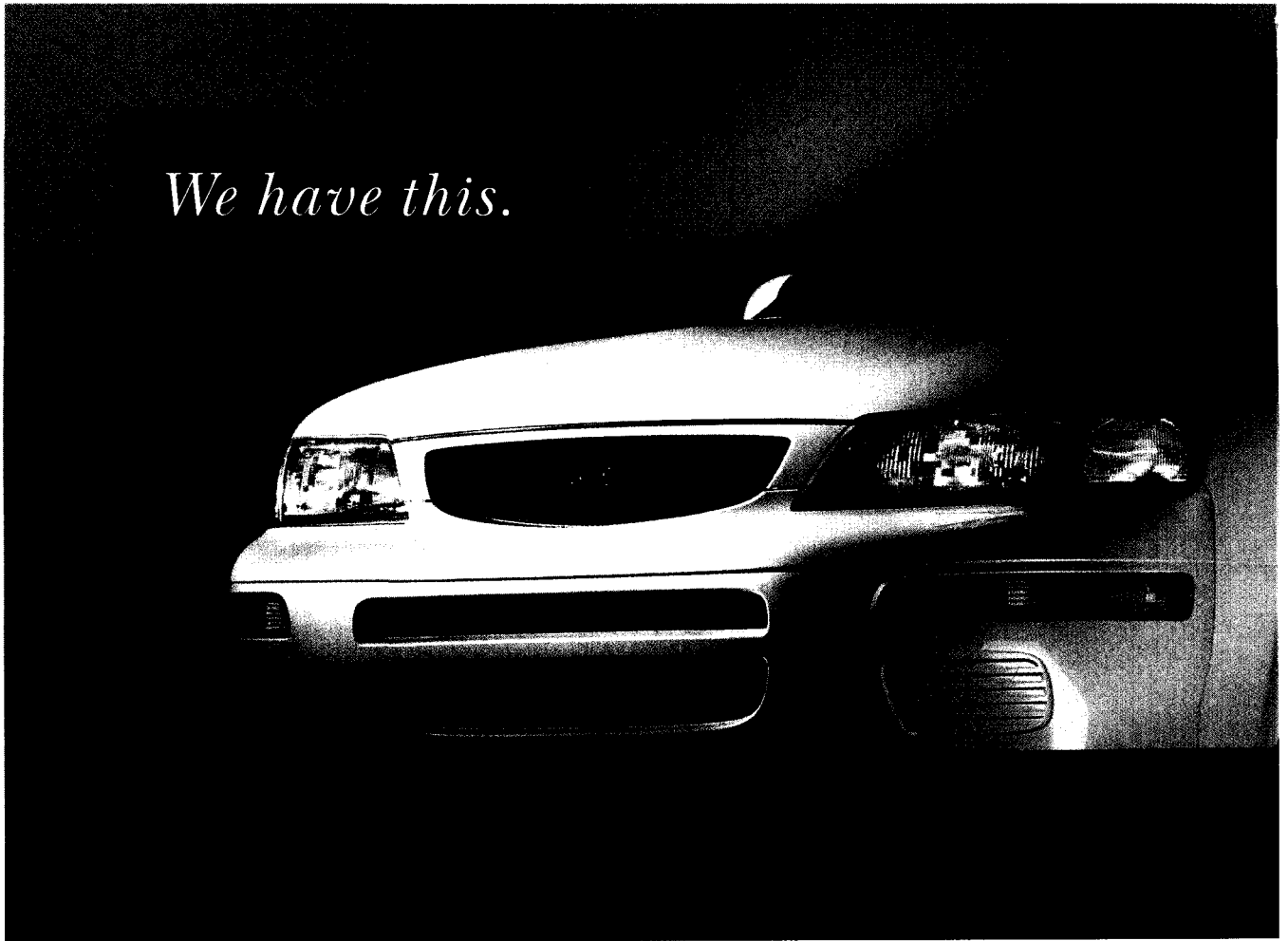
*Paris has
the Eiffel Tower.*

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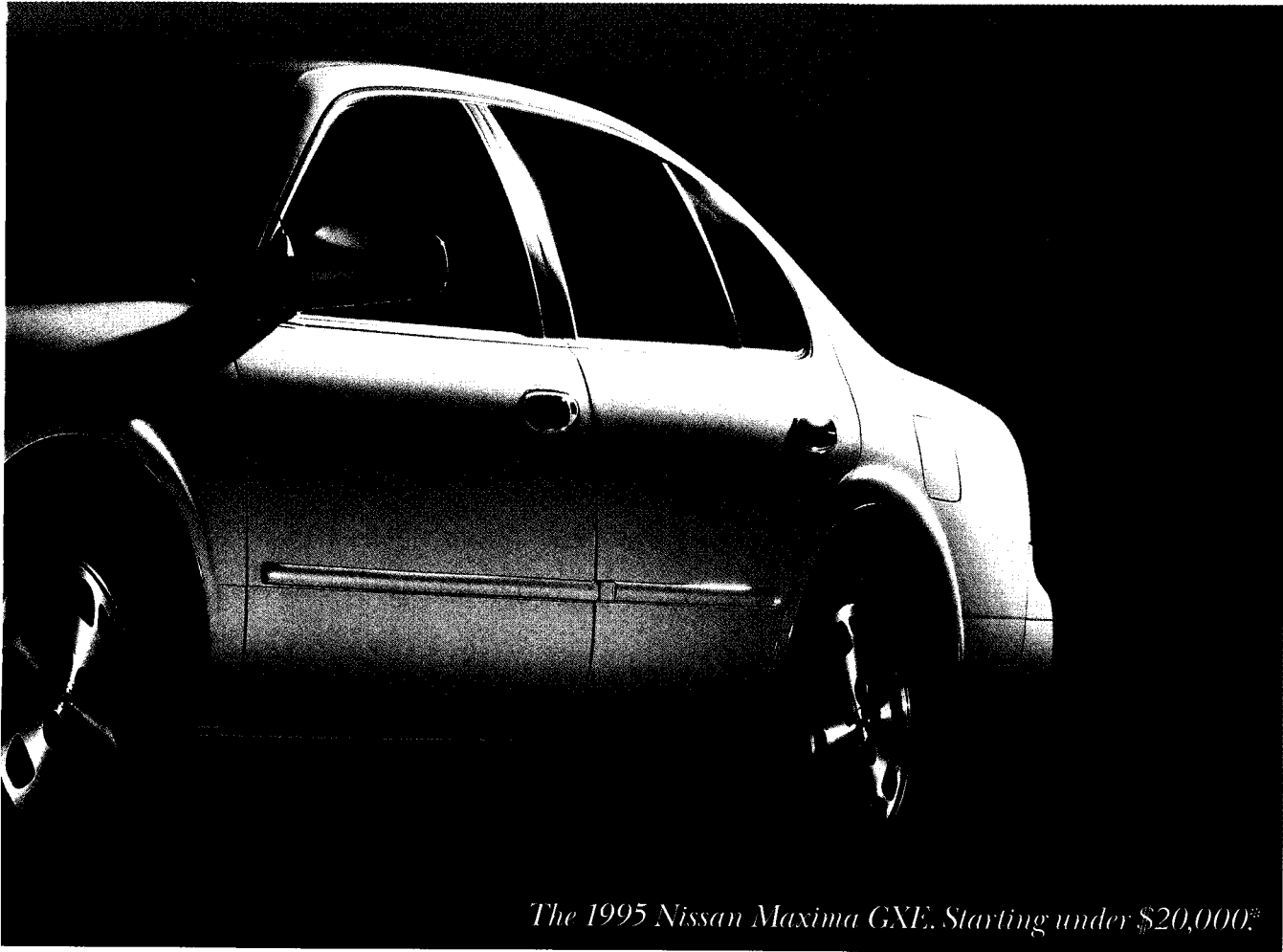
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For those keeping score at home, all this equates to scorching 0-60 times that are faster than a 1994

Multi-link Beam Suspension™ has three separate U.S. patents pending. We won't go into a great amount of scientific detail, but we will say that the new Maxima rides quieter and smoother over rough roads than a Lexus ES 300 and can outcorner



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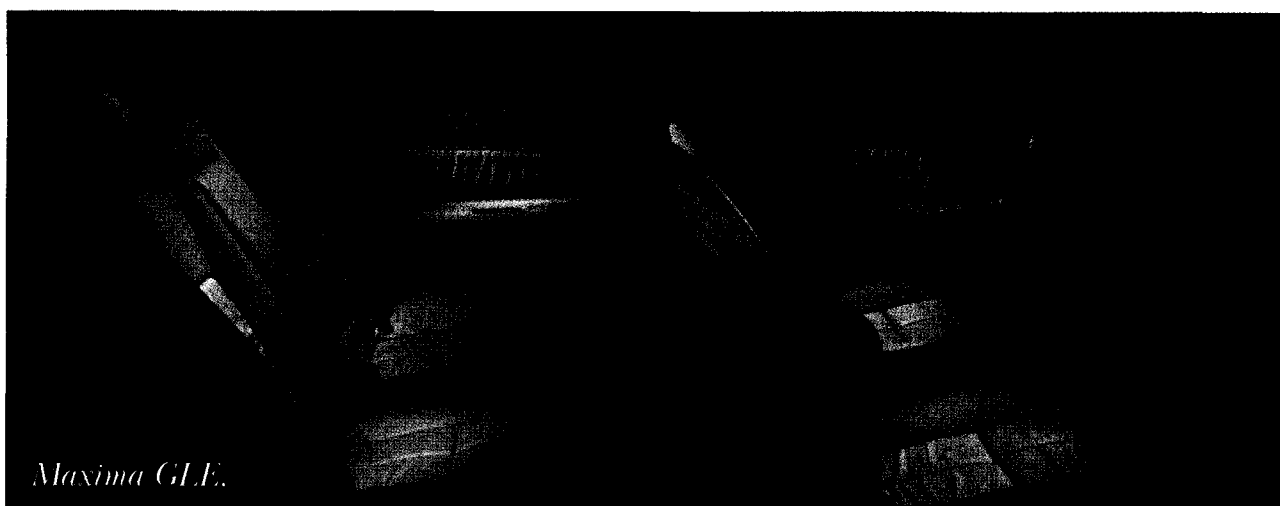
an Acura Legend LS with relative ease.[§]

Of the many significant improvements, perhaps the most notable is the increased cabin volume. We've added more leg room, more shoulder room and more head room (which means, among other things, our car now possesses more head room than a Rolls-Royce Silver Spur). The amount of

luxury was enlarged as well. The dash and door panels on the Maxima GLE are now graced with beautiful woodgrain appointments. The GLE driver's seat is now electronically adjustable in eight different directions. And for your listening

in the doors, and numerous active-safety capabilities which are intended to help you avoid an accident in the first place.

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By this point, you've no doubt recognized that "new and improved" has become something of a mantra to the engineers of the new Maxima. The area of safety, of course, is no exception. The Maxima now provides its passengers with standard dual airbags, high-strength steel pipe beams

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Daniel Polsby seems to discount the importance of the Second Amendment to arguments against gun control by advancing the argument as “I admit that my behavior is very dangerous to public safety, but the Second Amendment says I have a right to do it anyway.” The Constitution has never protected criminal behavior. Even the much-maligned Fifth Amendment, extensively used by various criminals over the years to avoid prosecution, has a crucial basis in recognizing and protecting the rights of citizens. As prosecutors increasingly were faced with this defense, they responded in a way I believe the country’s founders would approve: by improving evidence-gathering and crafting better cases against alleged criminals. The Second Amendment’s applicability was conclusively reaffirmed in 1982 by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution, which cited sixty-five references and closed its nineteen-page report with the statement that “what is protected is an individual right of a private citizen to own and carry firearms in a peaceful manner.”

George R. Pisani
Lawrence, Kans.

A few days after reading Daniel Polsby’s critique of gun control, I read this in *The New York Times*: “In 1992, handguns were used in the murders of 33 people in Britain, 36 in Sweden, 97 in Switzerland, 128 in Canada, 13 in Australia, 60 in Japan, and 31,220 in the United States.” In 1990 it was reported that the rate of death by homicide among young men in Australia was 0.3 per 100,000 people. In the United States it was more than 21 per 100,000. That’s seventy times as great as the Australian rate. It is ridiculous to think that any country that allows the mass arming of its people can approach the low murder rates of other industrialized democracies.

Thomas Wagner
New York, N.Y.

A year ago I wrote you an angry letter in response to an article by Erik Larson (“The Story of a Gun,” January, 1993, *Atlantic*) which I believe was viciously biased against the rights of Americans to own guns. I also expressed doubt that you would publish a more honest and balanced view of this subject. It appears I was wrong.

I have just read the article by Daniel Polsby, which is decidedly more balanced. Fair is fair, and I feel I owe you an “attaboy” if not an apology.

Richard A. Conrad
Juneau, Alaska

Daniel D. Polsby replies:

Many readers evidently feel that murder by gunshot is worse than murder by other means. To people who think that what is important is the *murder* rate, and not the *gun-murder* rate, Jane Edwards’s statistic—a gun-murder rate thirty times as high in Switzerland as in England—will seem tendentious. The World Health Organization gives the Swiss murder rate as 1.2 per 100,000—twice as high as that for England and Wales (which, at 0.6 per 100,000, is one of the lowest in the world). Nothing follows from this observation. The Scottish murder rate is three times as high as the English rate—with the same gun-control laws. The murder rate in Northern Ireland is almost *nine* times as high as in England—with the same gun-control laws and much tougher enforcement.

Sarah Brady asks us to judge the Brady law by how many ineligible people are intercepted trying to buy a handgun. Because of the availability of equally dangerous substitutes (rifles, shotguns, and stolen or borrowed handguns), the real test of the law will be its effect on crimes and violence. That was, after all, the criterion urged by the law’s proponents before it was enacted.

Kaa Byington seems not to be aware that the Federalist Papers advocated the Constitution, not the Bill of Rights. Hamilton actually *opposed* the Bill of Rights, as “not only unnecessary in the proposed Constitution, but even dangerous.” A Bill of Rights, he wrote, in Number 84, “would contain various exceptions to powers not granted; and on this very account, would afford a colorable pretext to claim more than were granted. For, why declare that things shall not be done, which there is no power to do?” Hamilton’s conception of an armed citizenry, what was called a “select” militia, looked rather too much like a standing army to the anti-federalist sponsors of the Bill of Rights. It was this conception that the Second Amendment rejected.

Thomas Wagner’s raw numbers require much more interpretation than he

gives them. As I pointed out, there are plenty of examples of populations with easy access to firearms and low homicide rates and of populations with restricted access to firearms and high homicide rates. Firearms violence is much more closely related to the *demand* for guns than it is to their supply, and rehearsing lists of statistics does not help one to understand why some people (but not others) demand guns for illegal purposes.

Apparently I have failed to persuade many people that firearms policy should first of all be addressed apart from the Constitution. A brief comment is warranted. There is an astounding disparity between conventional editorial-page pronouncements concerning the right to bear arms and the views of almost all the qualified historians and constitutional-law scholars who have studied the subject. The overwhelming weight of authority affirms that the Second Amendment establishes an *individual* right to bear arms, which is not dependent upon joining something like the National Guard. It goes without saying that like all constitutional rights, the right to keep and bear arms is subject to reasonable regulation consistent with its purposes.

The Coming Anarchy

Sierra Leone is, as it has always been, a beautiful country in West Africa populated with proud and peaceful people. In “The Coming Anarchy” (February *Atlantic*) Robert D. Kaplan attempts to prove his thesis regarding a future world of chaos and disorder at the expense of Sierra Leone and its people without any apparent serious journalistic or academic research. Instead he quotes an unnamed government minister and cites a few random events of violence as proof of a general situation in Sierra Leone. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Unlike many African countries, since its independence, in 1961, Sierra Leone has had a stable governmental system. The coup in 1992 occurred at a time when the corruption of the old regime, which had been in power for more than twenty years, became overwhelmingly unfair to the people. Because of our people’s basically peaceful nature, we had tolerated for too long an oppressive and

profligate government that had brought the country to the edge of bankruptcy and had caused the country to be blacklisted by the World Bank. The new government is led by Captain Valentine Strasser. Kaplan's criticism of Strasser is that he was born poor and is under thirty. Apparently Kaplan believes that only aristocratic septuagenarians can be effective leaders. However, our government has already achieved good standing with both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Our government is seeking to improve the welfare of our people. Unfortunately, our country does not have the financial resources and expertise to do so without Western help. This is especially true in view of the enormous costs our country has suffered in defending our borders from intrusion by Liberian rebel forces and in coping with the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the Liberian-supported rebel forces—which costs our country has had to bear with minimal aid from the West.

The United States should be in the forefront in helping those who truly deserve help, rather than directing disproportionate aid, resources, and attention to those areas that grab headlines by death and destruction.

Thomas K. Kargbo

*Ambassador of the
Republic of Sierra Leone
Washington, D.C.*

Robert Kaplan's powerful, disturbing article is much heavier on generalization and prognostication than on reporting. Many of the trends he describes may well be overwhelming the planet, and much of what he predicts may well come to pass, but the view he takes is so long that its value as journalism is questionable. I can speak with detailed knowledge about only one subject he touches on—democratization in Africa, particularly in Togo, part of that belt of artificial countries on the west coast. In 1991 President Gnassingbé (no longer Etienne) Eyadema was nearly overthrown, not simply by "thousands of youths" with rocks in their hands but by a democratic movement. Strikes by bush-taxi drivers and market women, organized demonstrations, and international pressure have obliged Eyadema to bargain with the opposition and, this past February, allow Togo's first

multiparty election ever. If it were simply a matter of stone-throwing youths, he would have wiped out the opposition at the start. To say that the opposition's "behavior may herald a regime more brutal than Eyadema's repressive one" is the kind of conjecture that makes so much of the article impossible to engage with intellectually. It may, but it may not.

Almost all the violence has come from the President's military; having lived under the dictatorship and seen its brutality ten years ago, I wouldn't indulge in speculative comparative blame so lightly. When I went back to Togo in 1992, it was clear that the upheaval had released ethnic hatreds and social chaos and nearly destroyed the ailing economy. It was also clear that it had changed the thinking of thousands of Togolese. For the first time, perhaps, in their history they saw themselves as actors, not merely the subjects of colonial or indigenous tyranny; and the same idea has traveled across much of the continent. Kaplan calls this an "epiphenomenon." Everything will seem an epiphenomenon in geologic time; in the long run we'll all be dead. Kaplan criticizes diplomats whose view of Africa is limited to the windows of their air-conditioned cars, and he says we can't afford to ignore "this dying region." But his own view, in spite of his years of travel and reporting, is so long, and so lacking in nuance or distinctions, that no one could possibly care what happens in Africa or anywhere else. It would be better for them to die off like clouds or insects, on the chance that something more hopeful will take their place.

George Packer
Cambridge, Mass.

As a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo from 1988 to 1991, I witnessed the crumbling of a promising, friendly, workable nation into virtual chaos. At several points Robert Kaplan mentions the disorder in Togo as typical of cases in which an emerging Third World "shantytown" ruler is displaced from a rural area into a city, where jobs are few and crime is rampant.

Although Togo is only briefly mentioned in Kaplan's lengthy article, it is used as evidence to support his assumption that this political tumult—along with disease, deforestation, withdrawal of colonial patronage, and rural exodus—is responsible for the current state of affairs

This statement is a careless dismissal of efforts and lives that cannot be ignored. General Eyadema was forced to step down in 1991 because of the painstaking efforts of the interim President, Joseph Kokou Koffigoh, and business and religious leaders throughout the country, who brought the economy to its knees through organized labor strikes and arranged protests. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and the National Democratic Institute pressured the regime to hold fair elections, and the NDI monitored the ballot boxes in the summer of last year.

Not until the military firebombed Koffigoh's house, critically wounded another candidate (Sylvanus Olympio's grandson), and murdered hundreds of innocent civilians, thirty of whom were found floating in a lagoon in downtown Lome, did these *democratic* efforts fail and lead to mayhem, which was encouraged and supported by Eyadema himself. In order to prove that the country could not survive without his "leadership," Eyadema's thugs shot at, looted, burned, and intimidated everyone and everything in his path. Eyadema was re-elected this past August for another six- or seven-year term with more than 95 percent of the vote. Only after most of the organized opposition to Eyadema had either been killed or fled the country did chaos begin to reign in the streets of Lome in the form of the "Soweto-like stone-throwing adolescents" referred to by Kaplan and the magazine *West Africa*. In fact, many sources claim that the thugs were Eyadema's own soldiers, attempting once again to scare the population into re-electing him.

Despite the horrible outcome of the Togolese affair, it began with organization, intelligence, and democratic intentions under extremely adverse conditions. Togolese educators, religious leaders, and bureaucrats brought Eyadema's methods to the attention of the world, persuading the United States and France to withdraw their support for the man, and forcing Eyadema to the negotiating table and toward accountability for his pillaging of the national treasury and resources.

Stephen F. Dexter Jr.
South Hamilton, Mass.

Robert Kaplan's panoply of evils is deeply troubling, even if not one more person or centimeter of the earth's sur-

face succumbs to their influence. Yet his central argument as to why readers should ultimately care is that "we're next." He doesn't make his case, in my view. Despite what Kaplan asserts, this outcome is not inevitable, or even likely. He offers no persuasive evidence as to why we should expect straight-line geographic or behavioral expansion of today's ills with no mitigation or reversal by prevailing cultures or purposeful outside intervention. Perhaps more important, he misses an opportunity to identify the steps we can take now in foreign policy, legal reforms, social programs, and individual conduct to stem the tide.

Robert F. Ehrhardt
Hamden, Conn.

While finding much to agree with in "The Coming Anarchy," I was puzzled by Robert Kaplan's glowing description of Turkish *gecekondus*. It was hardly more than ten years ago that these were described as a breeding ground for the extreme right-wing Grey Wolves who were destabilizing Turkey, including Ali Agca, the man who tried to assassinate the Pope.

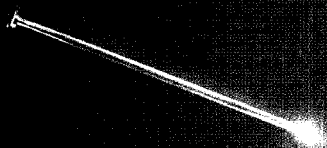
The fact that Kurds are found everywhere in Turkey does not, as Kaplan claims, rule out federalism as a solution for the Kurdish problem. The great majority of Kurds live in the southeast area, to which they are indigenous; the area is populated almost entirely by Kurds (as Kaplan pointed out elsewhere in the article). An autonomous region for the Kurds would create a more effective buffer than the current situation does.

It is also much easier to justify an autonomous region for the Kurds than it was for the Turkish minority in Cyprus, who were scattered throughout the island. Unlike the Kurdish identity, Turkish Cypriot identity had not been denied; the intercommunal fighting in the mid-1960s resulted in only a few casualties on both sides. Yet the Turks insisted on a federated state for the Turkish minority well before 1974, when the Athens junta provided them with a pretext to invade, partition, and ethnically cleanse the island.

The arms trade is surely a major destabilizing factor—yet there is no mention of it in Kaplan's article.

Anne M. Rice
Great Falls, Va.

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Robert D. Kaplan replies:

Owing to its nonstrategic isolation, extreme poverty, and record of political instability, West Africa attracts few businessmen or policy analysts in comparison with Asia, Latin America, the Near East, or Europe. Thus visitors to West Africa tend to be those who come to sympathize rather than analyze.

Some letter writers, including Ambassador Kargbo, want readers to believe that "peaceful" populaces have unaccountably had violent, incompetent regimes inflicted on them. I reject this view. For decades now West African regimes have been overwhelmingly bad: such basic trends are not accidental bad luck. The ambassador writes that "since its independence, in 1961, Sierra Leone has had a stable governmental system." In a thirteen-month period in 1967 and 1968 there were three coups. Other years have been characterized by states of emergency, assassination attempts, and the need to import troops from Guinea to serve as presidential bodyguards. Animosity between ethnic groups has made governing Sierra Leone a difficult enterprise. The new regime is as I described it in my article. The roll of disasters is just too great to be wished away by this success story or that. Rather, it has to do with the various environmental and demographic factors I wrote about.

Secret Nuclear War

I am writing concerning the review by Thomas Powers of *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War*, by Carole Gallagher ("Downwinders," March *Atlantic*). Since Powers has no direct experience with nuclear fallout, I decided to reply, because I do have experience. I operated uranium mines in Utah and Arizona in the 1950s, and I was a downwinder resident of St. George, Utah (1953–1963), and worked at the Nevada test site (NTS) beginning in October of 1961.

The "anecdotal evidence" of downwind tragedy is repeated here for the umpteenth time. This "evidence" is definitely anecdotal! The actual cases have been tried in the courts and a bill was passed by Congress to compensate people who could provide evidence of cancer caused by fallout.

Some of the anecdotes are magnified by Powers's review. The NTS is upwind from St. George in the prevailing westerly wind belt. It would be a rare and curious wind that would blow toward Los Angeles. St. George was not selectively chosen to receive the fallout. Tests were not done on windy days, and the fallout in Utah was not delivered from "smoky haze" or "pink clouds" but from clear sky ten to twenty-four hours later. The material from the atomic blast dissipated and decayed during that time. We who lived there could tell by using a Geiger counter when fallout was taking place, and the actual exposure from any one test was extremely low. Fallout did not blister or burn, and you cannot see or feel it. In fact, one of the insidious things about it is that there are no immediate effects of any kind.

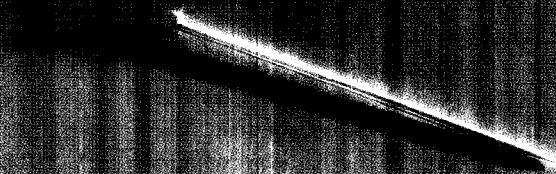
The sheep story has been greatly embellished over the years, so that it now includes deformities and two-headed sheep, whereas extensive animal experiments at the NTS over many years, using farm animals, dogs, and mice, showed no such genetic effects.

The mention of five cases of childhood leukemia in a city of 2,000 should have been two cases in a city of 5,000, as reported in *Science* magazine. These cases occurred in 1960, two years after the 1958–1961 test moratorium was in place.

People from Cedar City, Utah, could not have seen the fireball of tests at the NTS, which were conducted 200 miles to the west. In St. George, which was 140 miles away, we could not see the fireball, but the sky lit up to the zenith and we heard the blast. The Cedar City girl who saw the fireball and thought it was a flying saucer must have been dreaming. All atmospheric tests were announced, plainly felt and heard, and much discussed.

Many people die of cancer throughout the world. People died of cancer long before the atom bomb was developed. Elmer Pickett, of St. George, was identified as being a mortician. He was not a mortician but a hardware store owner, and consequently his diagnosis of cancer in others is without merit. He has been frequently quoted before. The story that most of the *Conqueror* cast died of cancer due to fallout from one atomic test disregards the fact that most of the cast were local residents and Paiute Indians who did not develop cancer; many are

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still around today, forty years later. Susan Hayward and John Wayne were only briefly in St. George. That they died of cancer may be related to their lifestyle, but it is certainly not related to this one exposure. The 5,000 people who lived there at that time did not have any unusual incidence of cancer death.

I agree with Powers in believing that President Eisenhower never said we could "sacrifice a few thousand people" for the security of the country. This so-called quote is only the latest fantasy of the anti-nuke groups. If he had ever said that, it would have been widely reported at the time and the press would have had a field day! To accuse him of that thirty years after his death is a dirty cheap shot.

Richard V. Wyman
Boulder City, Nev.

Three points cry out for correction in Thomas Powers's otherwise splendid review essay "Downwinders."

In his effort to offer a succinct and pithy summary of "the history of the arms race at the heart of the Cold War," in which "American nuclear weapons were the counterweight to Soviet armies," Powers leaves out the central dynamic of this incalculably costly competition, the military-industrial complexes of the two superpowers. A good reason, in other words, is taken as the real reason. The stubborn and quite successful resistance of the U.S. military-industrial complex to significant cuts in the defense budget years after the demise of the Soviet empire demonstrates how powerful interests that benefit from arms races provide much of the impetus for these contests.

More serious, however, is Powers's support for the bogus claim that "American plans for a space-based system for defense against missile attack, popularly called Star Wars, threatened to neutralize the trillion-dollar strategic rocket forces built by the Soviets." There was never the slightest possibility that SDI could effect such a neutralization. Nor was a "zillion-dollar... space-based defense system of their own" necessary, since the inevitably leaky U.S. system could be rendered effectively useless simply by sending greater numbers of warheads against it.

The larger claim—"the Soviet Union collapsed in the late 1980s under the financial strain of keeping up"—is a correct but only partial explanation for what hap-

pened, overlooking the multiple ways in which a totalitarian state and a command economy cannot stay abreast of the innovations constantly churned up by a democratic polity and a market-led economy. The Western lead in computers in particular, as the chief of the Soviet General Staff, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, confessed to Leslie Gelb in 1983, was the coup de grace to Soviet superpower status.

Richard L. Clinton
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oreg.

Thomas Powers replies:

Just what role nuclear weapons played at the beginning of, during, and at the end of the Cold War is the subject I tried to explore in my review. Over the past fifty years, when Americans argued about nuclear weapons, what was really on their minds was often the Cold War itself. So it remains. Richard Wyman thinks the anti-nuclear activists have depended too heavily on anecdotal evidence, and of course he is right. But for many years they had no choice. The Atomic Energy Commission and other authorities lied about the facts, hid the results of their own studies, and tried to quiet doubts with reassuring platitudes. It was anecdotal evidence that spurred the activists to ask questions, and the hard evidence now slowly being released confirms their fears that radiation from nuclear testing was indeed dangerous, and that government officials knew about the dangers and tried to hide them.

Richard Clinton raises points far too large to settle definitively here. My belief is that the nuclear-arms race took the place of a conventional struggle ending in a great war. I never expected things to work out as they have, and am still trying to understand how to explain this surprising turn of events. But of one thing I am sure: Soviet military authorities took space-based defense systems very seriously after President Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" speech in 1983. Stopping Star Wars was the chief Soviet foreign-policy goal over the next two years, and it was replaced by *glasnost* and *perestroika*—the policies that announced Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to abandon the Soviet Union's global ambitions. These beliefs are all arguable; I state them here to clarify what I think the argument is about.



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Demographics

Sales of new cars typically peak in June, which on average sees some 10 percent of the year's total. If recent trends continue, fewer new cars than usual will be white: although this color has long dominated the market, its popularity dropped sharply last year, when it accounted for 20 percent of all vehicles bought (as against 24 percent in 1992). The emerging contender: green, which, with more than 15 percent of all sales, was the second most popular color last year. Roseann Forde, of Du Pont, which provides much of the country's automotive paint, links the popularity of green to a growing interest in the environment (the last time green cars were in vogue was during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a peak of the environmental movement) and to its association with feelings of security (it is, after all, the color of money). Other hues to watch for on the roads in coming years: purple (indicative, Forde says, of "a deep, shadowy personality") and gold (which "attracts people who enjoy showing their affluence").



The Skies

June 1, Saturn lies below the last-quarter Moon just before dawn. 19, Jupiter—high in the evening sky all month long—is just north of the waxing Moon, with the bright stars Spica (in the constellation Virgo) and Antares (in Scorpius) to its west and east, respectively. 21, at 10:48 A.M. EDT, the Summer Solstice, the beginning of summer; today has the longest period of daylight in the year. 23, Full Moon, also known this month as the Rose, Honey, or Strawberry Moon.



Government

June 1, after today only tuna that is deemed "dolphin safe" (a designation that prohibits fishermen from encircling dolphins in nets) may be sold in the United States. The legislation to this end—an amendment to the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972—is aimed at countries that export tuna to the United States, notably Mexico and Venezuela; all but a handful of boats in the U.S. tuna-fishing fleet have already abandoned methods that kill dolphins. Also this month, 13 states hold election primaries: Alabama, California, Iowa, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, and South Dakota on the 7th; Maine, North Dakota, South Carolina, and Virginia on the 14th; and Utah on the 28th.

Environment

June 29, by today community water systems that test fewer than five samples per month for contamination—generally, systems serving 4,100 or fewer customers—must have their facilities, operations, and water sources thoroughly surveyed by outside inspectors. The inspections mark the first phase in a major Environmental Protection Agency initiative to clean up the nation's drinking water; they should be extended to most of the nation's larger water systems (which typically test samples more frequently) by the end of the decade. Several large systems have recently experienced significant safety failures. For ex-



ample, in March of 1993 more than 370,000 people fell ill after the parasite cryptosporidium proliferated in Milwaukee water, and for three days last December a parasite scare forced residents of Washington, D. C., to boil their drinking water. Critics attributed the failures to outdated filtering systems and inadequately trained personnel—factors that on-site inspections will assess. In the meantime, an increasing number of people simply aren't drinking tap water: last year Americans bought some 2.46 billion gallons of bottled water, up from 2.2 billion gallons in 1992.



Expiring Patent

No. 4,030,867. Apparatus for forming a bar of soap from leftover pieces. "Apparatus for molding soap bars from leftover pieces of soap, comprising an outer casing with a hinged and slotted door . . . ; an open topped hopper . . . ; a mold . . . ; heating means . . . ; and . . . means for sensing . . . when the weight of the accumulated pieces of soap is equal to the weight of a complete bar, whereby the pieces of soap are then melted, the molten soap flowing . . . into the mold to form a new bar."

Health & Safety

June ushers in the most treacherous season for bicyclists: if past trends hold, nearly 40 percent of the year's bicycle accidents will occur during this month and the coming two. Fittingly, on June 1 parents in New York acquire a new incentive for persuading their children to wear bicycle helmets: the threat of fines. Parents can be assessed up to \$50 if their children (age 14 and under) are seen riding helmetless in their presence (unless the parents sub-



sequently buy a helmet or demonstrate financial hardship). Similar statutes are already in force in states including Connecticut, New Jersey, Virginia, Tennessee, California, Georgia, Massachusetts, Maryland, and Washington, prompted by evidence that helmets reduce the incidence of head injury by as much as 85 percent. Some 180,000 children age 15 and under are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year for bicycle-related head injuries; about 300 children die from such injuries each year. Some argue that helmets should be mandated for all cyclists, regardless of age; the average age of those killed in bicycle accidents has risen by 10 years since 1975, to 27.5.

50 Years Ago

David L. Cohn, writing in the June, 1944, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "Congressmen, whatever their aesthetic blind spots, have passionate convictions about the uses and beauties of poetry; to them poetry is not, as it is to so many of us, an empty hodgepodge of words about larks, long-winded Greeks, and plowmen breaking the stubborn glebe. They regard it as a tool of their profession and even the prosiest orator breaks his oration every now and then, coats his tongue with honey or with fire as the case may be, and lets fly—as the poet said." This does something to popularize poetry among their still rude constituents and bears out their contention that it has practical angles."



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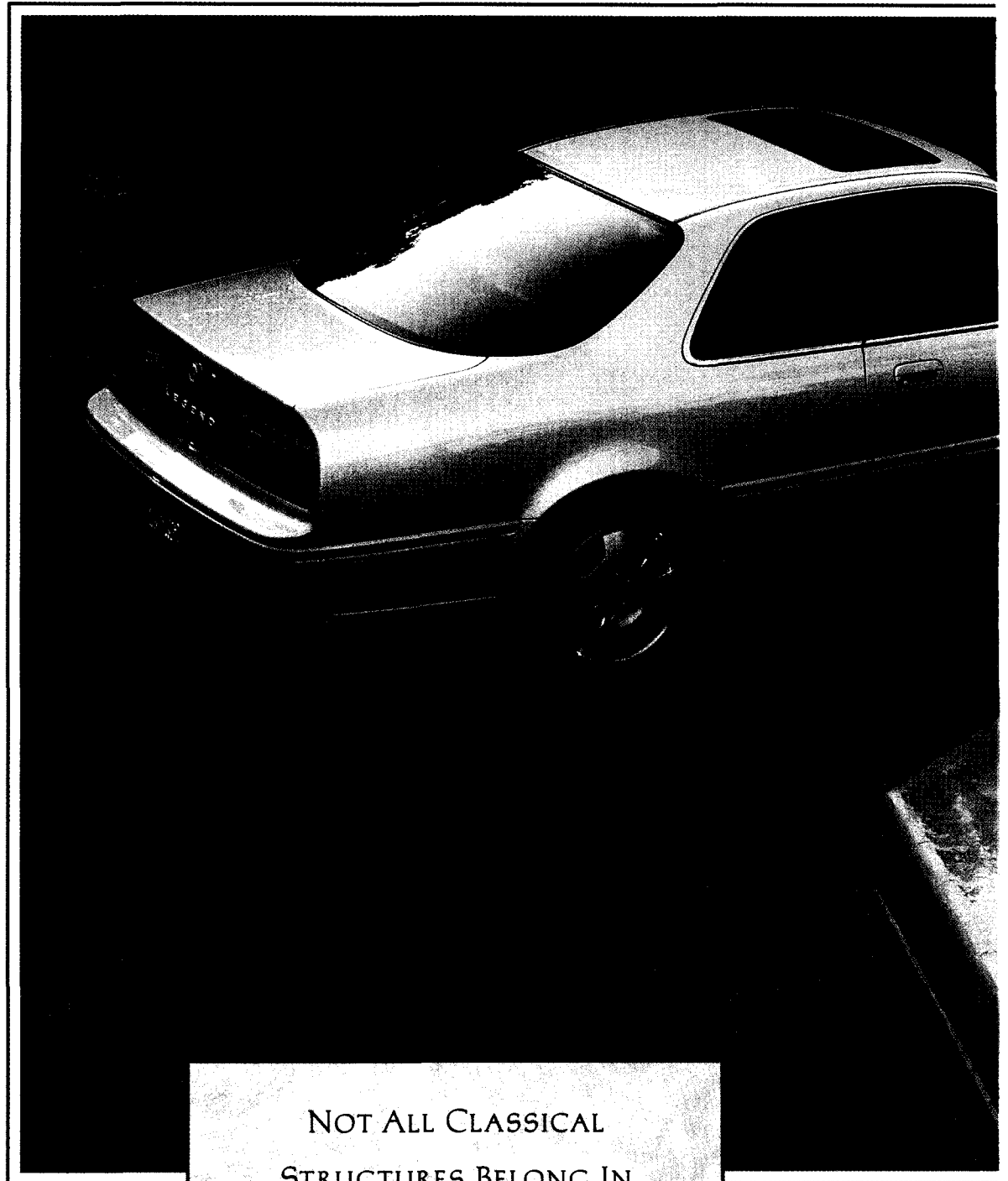
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Busy, Busy, Busy

The work ethic in America extends to our spare time

IN search of a telephone number and an address recently, I flipped through a new edition of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Associations*; when next I looked up, an hour or so had gone by. With its 23,000 densely crafted entries, the *Encyclopedia of Associations* is an absorbing and indispensable reference work. It is also a monument to America as the world's leading nation of joiners. We like to think of this country, of course, as one of rugged individualists, and perhaps it is. But it is also a place where people need only the flimsiest hint of a shared interest to clump together like iron filings on a magnet. As Tocqueville and other observers have noted, there seems to be no activity, endeavor, condition, passion, peeve, or state of mind in America which lacks an institutional base to rally the faithful and carry the torch.

My own accomplishments in this respect have been very modest. At a young age I was a member of a fan club built around the Blackhawks comic-book series, my secret identity (I can now reveal) being that of "André." I have for some years been a member of the American Automobile Association, but the only meetings I attend involve tow trucks. In looking through the encyclopedia, I came to understand that my appreciation of America as a nation of joiners was extremely limited and largely abstract. I realized that I had little idea of the vast number of ways in which Americans, workaday demands behind them, deploy their energies and their time.

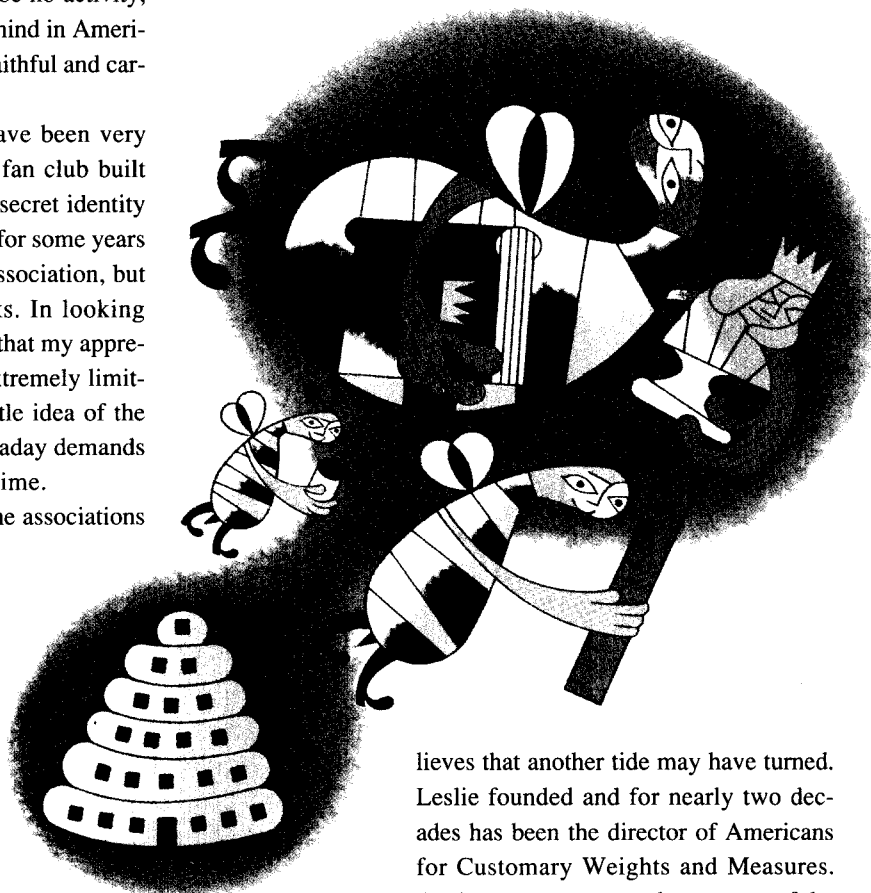
I decided to spend a day calling up some of the associations listed in the encyclopedia. My criteria for selection came down mostly to curiosity.

■ ■ ■

An advocate, I learned, can be found for almost anything, and advocacy is one of three broad categories into which the associations I encountered tend to fall. Joe Ann Ricca, who was until recently the president of the American branch of the Richard III Society, answered the phone at her office in Hackensack. She was quick to come to the defense of the generally vilified British monarch. Ricca contends that Richard's evil reputation was largely the creation of Tudor propagandists. (Henry VII, Richard's successor, burned the work of everyone who had anything good to say.) She point-

ed out that x-ray analyses of various portraits of Richard III show them to have been overpainted in order to magnify the size of the hump on his back. She questioned the implication of Richard in the famous murder, in 1483, of the two princes in the Tower, his young nephews and rivals for the throne, arguing that there are other plausible suspects, and that it is even possible that the princes escaped to the Continent. The Ricardians, 650 strong, publish a journal and sponsor scholarly research. They believe that they may at last have turned the tide.

Seaver Leslie, an artist who lives in Wiscasset, Maine, be-



lieves that another tide may have turned. Leslie founded and for nearly two decades has been the director of Americans for Customary Weights and Measures.

As the name suggests, the purpose of the group, which has 1,500 members, is to halt the encroachments in the United States of the metric system. The group's P.O. box number in Wiscasset is 5280, which is, of course, the number of feet in a mile. Its newsletter, *Footprint*, appears twice yearly, on

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the summer and winter solstices. Leslie observed during our conversation that traditional measures—the inch, the foot, the mile, the furlong—are all somehow derived from human proportions or human activity. The furlong, for example, was the distance a ploughman could walk from home and still be within earshot. Can it be coincidence, Leslie asked, that the rungs on ladders the world around, from culture to culture, are all a foot



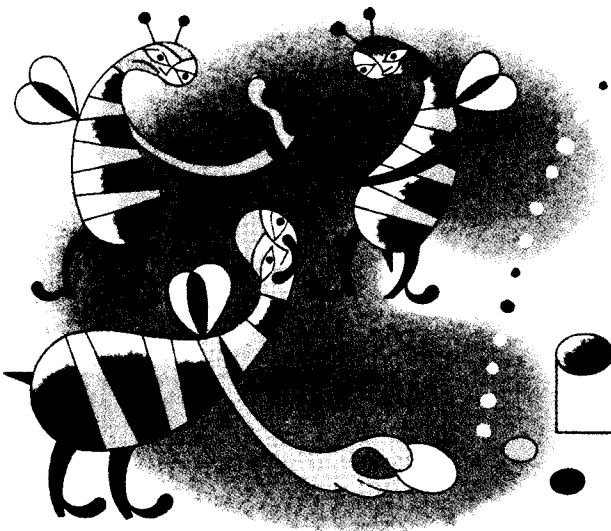
apart? Traditional measures, he said, “touch the poetic soul of every individual in America.” In contrast, when it comes to metric, people can’t even agree on which syllable to stress in the word “kilometer.” Leslie’s free time is spent lobbying for the repeal of Public Law 100-418, the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988, which enshrined the metric system as the preferred system of weights and measures for U.S. trade and commerce and required the U.S. government to begin using the metric system in all its operations. He noted that metric has been beaten back three times—in the 1870s, the 1920s, and the 1970s—and is confident it will be beaten back again.

On the other side of this issue is the American National Metric Council, an association based in Bethesda, Maryland, with 150 members, most of them corporate. The council’s president is John Deam, who in his professional life is the director of business operations for a company that designs laser-based measuring instruments. Deam, of course, holds Public Law 100-418 in high regard, and believes that once private industry comes around, the public will follow inexorably. He notes in metric’s defense that it is easy to comprehend the relationship of, say, centimeters to meters, whereas there is no such orderly relationship between feet and miles, or between inches and yards. He wonders what it says about this nation that at a time of an increasingly integrated world economy the United States stands alone among industrialized nations in its reserve toward the metric system. But Deam is heartened by some recent developments. Since last January, for example, the General Services Administration has been accepting new specifications for fed-

eral buildings only in metric units. For the record, the American National Metric Council does have an official position on the pronunciation of “kilometer”: accent on the first syllable, not the second—a position, I suspect, that will be as congenial to many Americans as the metric system itself. Asked, by the way, whether he uses a yardstick at home, Deam replied, “I’m afraid I do.”

■ ■ ■

A second category of associations is for those who might loosely be called contestants. I spoke with Tom Cabot, of Hermann, Missouri, who is the president of the National Organization of Mall Walkers, a group established “to give national recognition to people who walk in malls for exercise.” The organization sells log books so that its 1,000 members, most of whom are women above the age of fifty-five, can record their mileage, and it awards patches and pins to those who achieve certain distances. Cabot, who sells sports medallions and Christmas ornaments for a living, explained that mall

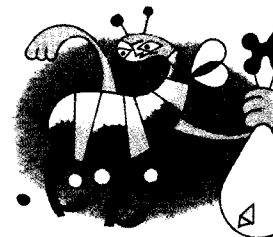


walking resembles the German tradition of outdoor “Volks marching.” In 1979 Cabot helped organize the American Volkssport Association, and sought to recruit the people he saw walking in malls. He founded the Mall Walkers because “I couldn’t get them outside.”

In Scranton, Pennsylvania, Bob O’Leary picked up the phone at the American Armwrestling Association. O’Leary, a distributor of nutritional supplements, is the executive chairman of the association, which has 2,000 members and is affiliated with the World Armwrestling Federation, headquartered in

Calcutta. (Arm wrestling is India’s second most popular sport, after soccer.) O’Leary explained that there are two styles of arm wrestling, stand-up and seated, and that arm wrestlers are known as “pullers.” Arm-wrestling tournaments are held somewhere in America every week of the year. Any major issues facing the arm-wrestling community? “Drug testing at national events,” O’Leary said. Also, a lot of effort has gone into lobbying for arm wrestling’s inclusion as an Olympic sport—“obviously long overdue.”

Larry Kahn, of the North American Tiddlywinks Association, in Silver Spring, Maryland, explains that most of the 100 dues-paying “winkers” in his group are men, and that most have a background in mathematics or computers. In the United States major tiddlywinks tournaments are held four or five times a year. NATWA has a sister organization, known as ETWA, in England; of



English winkers Kahn observes, “They’re even nerdier than we are.” Like participants in many other sports and games, winkers have developed a distinctive jargon. They may say, for instance, “I can’t pot my nurdled wink, so I’ll piddle you free and you can boon-dock a red.” Tiddlywinks apparently enjoyed something of an

efflorescence in the United States in the late 1960s and the 1970s, after which it entered a period of mild decline. Kahn blames this on the nation’s having experienced a time of cynical economic opportunism and creeping spiritual discontent, which together eroded the bedrock of silliness upon which the edifice of tiddlywinks is erected. Or so I inferred. Actually, what he said when asked about the cause of the decline was simply, “Reagan.”

■ ■ ■

Finally, there are the collectors. The world headquarters of the International Sand Collectors Society is located in Old

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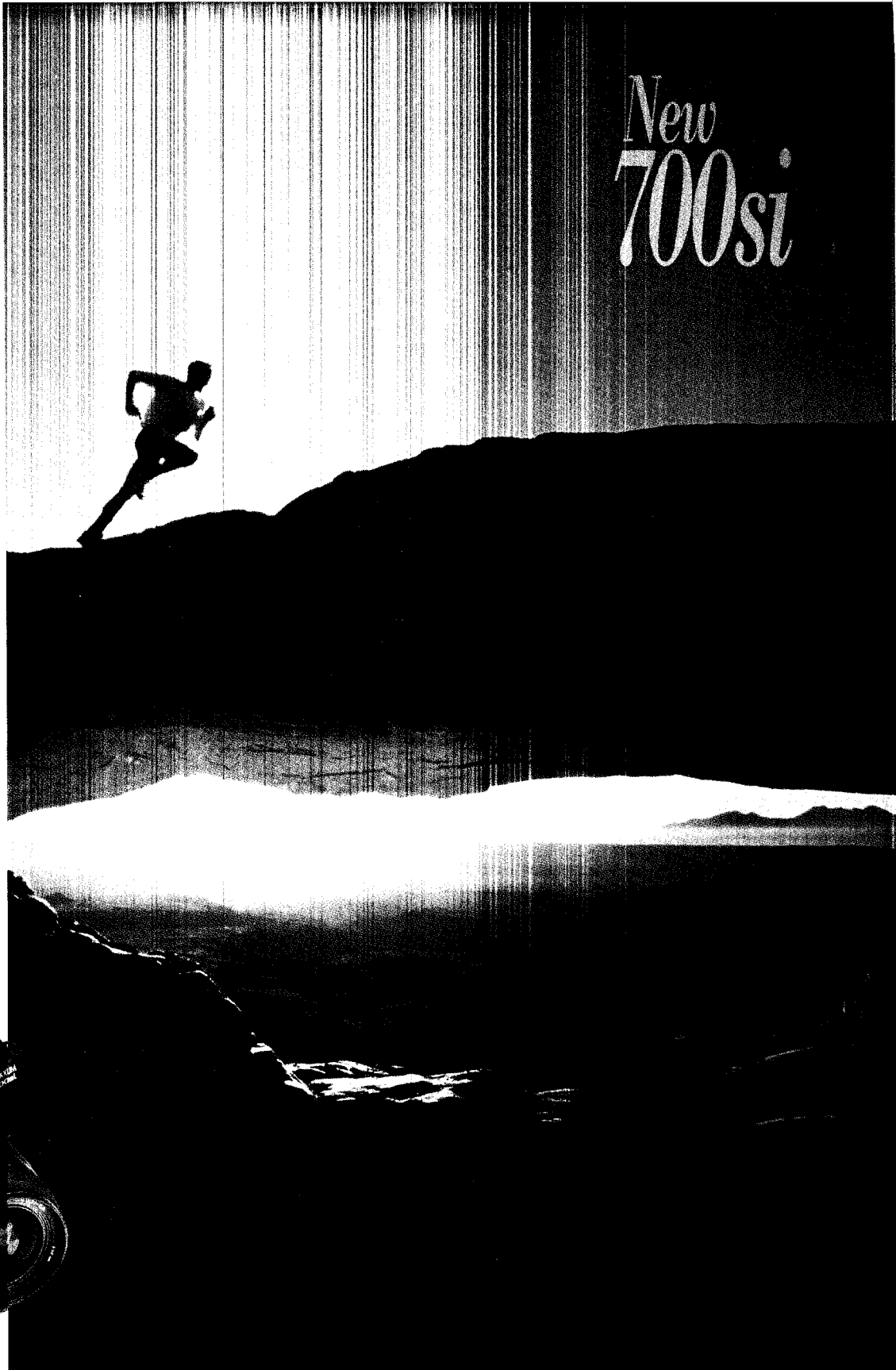
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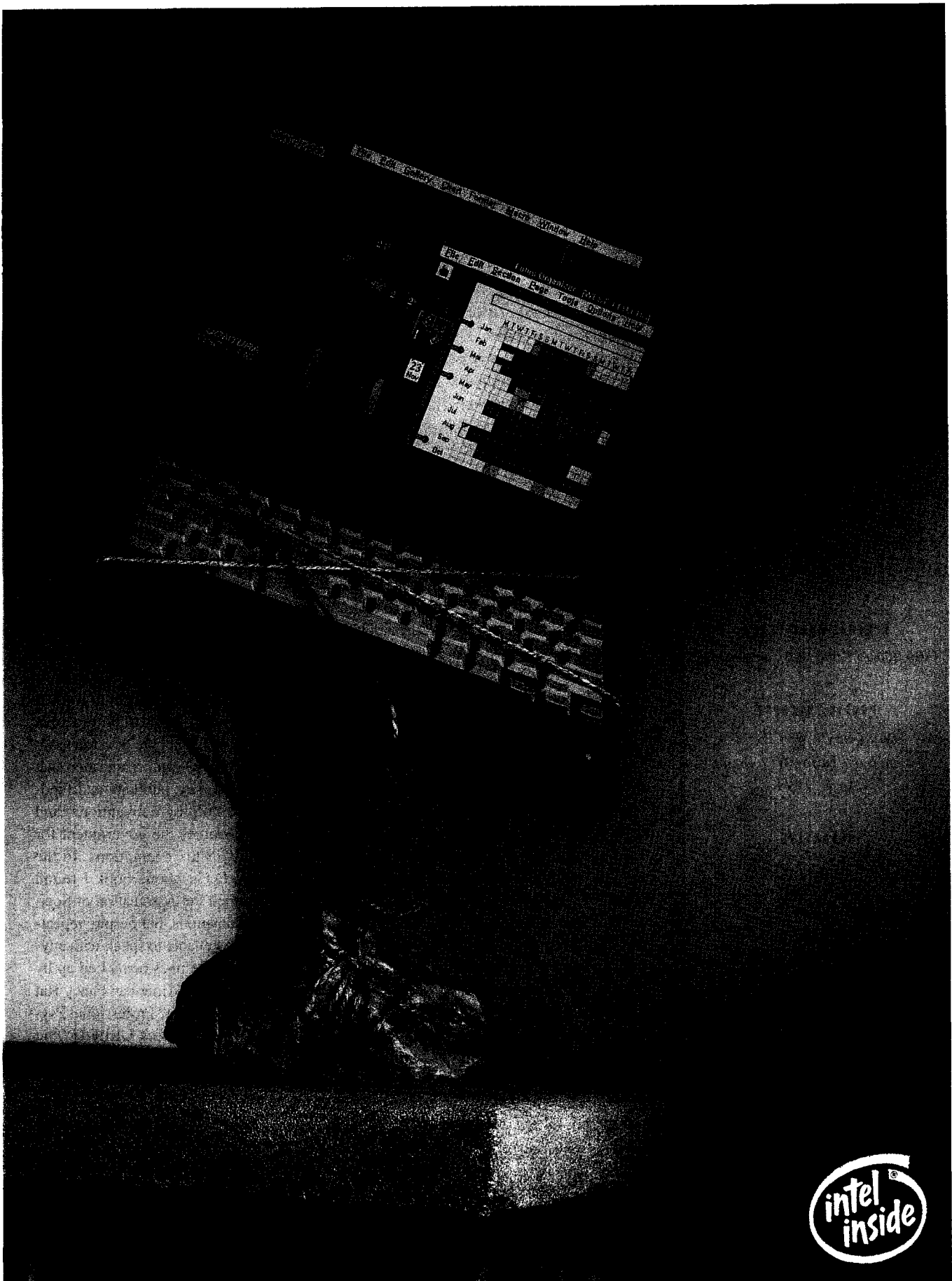
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THE ATLANTIC THANKS ALL
OUR WRITERS AND ARTISTS
FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING
CONTRIBUTIONS DURING
THE PAST YEAR

The Atlantic Monthly

Greenwich, Connecticut, and I spoke with its president, William S. Diefenbach, a retired management consultant. Diefenbach explained that the membership was held together, as it were, by "a common bond of sand." Sand from the beaches of Normandy, sand from Mount St. Helen's, sand from the Channel Tunnel, sand from the sand traps of famous golf courses. (A golf-course division of the society is in the planning stages.) The society has 400 members, Diefenbach said; General Norman Schwarzkopf, the commander of Operation Desert Storm, was granted honorary membership (which he accepted). Asked about activities, Diefenbach said, "We recently had a sand swap"—the first such event in the United States. Diefenbach puts out a newsletter, *The Sand Paper*, which among other things describes "the surpluses and needs of individual members." The members clearly don't want for projects to keep them occupied. Some items from the newsletter: "Bert Brim sent a supplement to his catalog of Ocean Beach Sands, bringing the number up to 830." "Angela Maure is back from holiday in Egypt, and offers you: Desert al Rayum, Hurghada, the Valley of the Kings (Karnak and Hatshepsut), and the small island of Magawish." "Warren Hatch has made a superb 58 minute VHS tape of 42 sands seen through a scope at 10 and 20x."

The man who answered the phone at the number listed for the International Carnivorous Plant Society was Leo Song, its business manager and also the manager of the greenhouse at California State University, in Fullerton. He explained that the purpose of the society, which has 700 members, is "to provide information that concerns carnivorous plants, from care and culture to taxonomy, nomenclature, political action, and the dissemination of new hybrid names." Asked what draws people to collecting carnivorous plants, Song said, "When you think about plants eating bugs, it kind of turns the tables." Asked about the disturbing reputation of the Venus's flytrap, Song called it ridiculous. "With the plants we've discovered so far," he said, "you don't have to worry about your cat get-

ting eaten—even with genetic engineering." He added, though, that when people ask him if dangerously carnivorous plants do exist, he always tells them, "Well, there are areas out there that haven't been explored."

Danny Perez, an electrician in Norwalk, California, would surely agree. Perez, too, is a collector, in a way. He heads the Center for Bigfoot Studies, whose purpose is to obtain a specimen of the large, shy, primateline creature that is believed by some to inhabit the northern woods. He was inspired to take up the cause, to which he devotes all his spare time, by the movie *The Legend of Boggy Creek*, a documentary about Bigfoot that he saw at the age of ten. Apparently the Bigfoot community, which consists of several hundred people, is divided on strategy, the division being between the "take-it-alive" camp and the "shoot-to-kill" camp. Perez favors the first approach. He conceded, however, that the second would be "a lot safer."

■ ■ ■

All told, I got in touch with about twenty-five associations, and at day's end it was hard to shake the feeling that compared with the lives of the people I had been talking to, my own was rudderless. Lifting my sights, I also began to wonder whether there must not exist an umbrella association to which people who run associations can belong—an organization that offers advice on, say, publicity and fundraising, or on holding conventions, and that perhaps lobbies the government for various kinds of tax exemptions. In the Washington, D.C., phone book I found something called the Association of Societies and Associations, but despite repeated attempts was unable to speak with anyone there. Were the lines being tied up by urgent calls from the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association? Professional Psy-

chics United? The U.S. Amateur Tug of War Association? The Marx Brothers Study Unit? The Flying Funeral Directors of America?

What I know is that according to the taped message, "all of our staff are busy." I don't doubt it for a second. ☼



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A Bold Proposal on Immigration

California will cease to be a democratic polity unless it lets its Mexican immigrants vote in local elections. Politically impossible? Yes—but a dramatically successful experiment in effective border control could change that political calculus

IN California immigration has become a hot political topic without quite becoming a debate. Like crime, it is a topic over which Californian political candidates contend mostly by going faster or further than their opponents in the same general direction. Control of the border, restrictions on even legal immigration, repatriation of illegal immigrants imprisoned for crimes com-

by Jack Miles

mitted in California, the reduction of health and education benefits for illegal immigrants, and an aggressive insistence that Washington pay the bill for policies made in Washington—proposals like these define the flow, and no one who aspires to office dares go against it. Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, both Democrats, both liberals, have each offered restrictionist immigra-

tion-reform proposals. Governor Pete Wilson, arriving a bit late on the scene and quietly jettisoning pro-immigration policies that he championed as a Republican senator, has offered proposals far more sweeping, including a patently unconstitutional demand that citizenship be denied to the American-born children of illegal immigrants. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Kathleen Brown, the daughter of one former governor and the sister of another, has her own immigration-reform agenda. All these politicians are responding to an uncompromising public mood.

Into the teeth of this gale comes an article published last year, in the anthology *The California-Mexico Collection*, making the bold suggestion that illegal Mexican immigrants to California should be not just legalized but also given the vote. Jorge G. Castañeda, a noted Mexican intellectual, writes in "Mexico and California: The Paradox of Tolerance and Dedemocratization" that, all other cultural and economic issues aside, the presence of a large, growing, and permanently disen-

A U.S. Border Patrol officer during Operation Blockade, in El Paso

franchised Mexican population in California is subverting the state's most basic tradition—its democracy.

Through no fault of its own, undocumented Mexican immigration is contributing to the "dedemocratization" of California society. . . . by the end of the twentieth century, the richest state in the world will have a terribly skewed political system, with a foreign plurality that works, consumes, and pays taxes, but does not vote, run for office, organize, or carry much political clout.

Californians who have commented on the political disenfranchisement (or non-enfranchisement) of illegal immigrants from Mexico have tended to see it as a problem for the immigrants themselves: lacking the vote, the immigrants lack influence. Castañeda sees the same disenfranchisement as a problem for California as a democratic society. Sixty-three percent of the students of the Los Angeles Unified School District are Latinos, many of whose parents are legally ineligible to vote; but, according to a former Los Angeles school board member, 75 percent of registered voters in California and 88 percent of those who actually vote have no children in school. True, parents are hurt by nonparents who refuse to be taxed to educate other people's children, but—Castañeda would argue—to see the resulting harm in classic interest-group terms is to misconstrue it. In a normal, healthy democracy, the self-interest of the parents, which coincides with the long-term self-interest of the society, would be backed by plenty of votes. A democratic society in which the parents of many children in the public school system lack the vote is abnormal and unhealthy. Whatever the laws on its books, it is, de facto, both undemocratic and dysfunctional.

That Castañeda has identified a grave weakness in California's democracy is, I think, irrefutable. And yet his remedy for this weakness is perfectly calculated to send an already inflamed controversy deeper into the flames: "The only realistic way to alter the negative effect of Mexican influence on California . . . is to change the nature of its origin by legalizing immigration and giving foreigners the right to vote in state and local elections." Castañeda recognizes that in practical, political terms, the odds against his view's prevailing in the near term are insuperable.

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The real stumbling block is that the decision to legalize immigration will not be made by those who would benefit from it most—the bottom tier—but rather by a white, Anglo, middle-class, and elderly electorate. The only way to change the nature of California politics is through legalization, but the only way to achieve legalization is to change the nature of California politics. Not an easy circle to square.

Castañeda draws a modicum of encouragement from the fact that Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Switzerland have granted foreigners the right to vote in state and municipal legislative elections. Following their lead, he proposes not that immigrant Mexicans be naturalized but rather that, while remaining Mexicans and without acquiring dual citizenship, they be allowed to vote in *California*

*Naturalization
and the vote have been
seen as inseparable—
which Castañeda
believes must change.*

state and local elections only. He recognizes that tradition in the United States has seen naturalization and the vote as inseparable, but this inseparability is just the part of the tradition that he believes must change.

The choice . . . lies between enfranchisement along European lines or continuing to deny foreigners political rights and relegating them to the bottom tier of California society. The fact that the problem is so strongly concentrated in California should serve as an incentive to finding a state or municipal solution. *What happens in California or Los Angeles and San Jose need not be a federal policy applicable throughout the country* [emphasis added].

There is a daring plausibility to Castañeda's analysis, but if California were to accept his proposal, the state would be saying, in effect, that on so crucial a matter as the prerogatives of citizenship its

relationship to Mexico counts for more than its relationship to the United States. After all, no comparable crisis of "dedemocratization" yet looms for the country as a whole. If Mexicans are understood to have migrated from Mexico to the United States, rather than to California, it would seem to be up to the federal government to determine their status, including their eligibility to vote in even local elections. Castañeda, however, prefers to see these immigrants as having come only to California rather than to the United States—a bold move on his part.

LIKE all the contributors to the anthology in which his article appears, Castañeda assumes that the U.S. Border Patrol is not and never will be a factor in the demographic future of the California-Mexico connection. Only one of his fellow contributors so much as mentions the Border Patrol, and then only to include it among potentially delinquent elements to which "the California connection itself may become hostage." For the rest, the constant assumption in *The California-Mexico Connection* is that illegal immigration is as uncontrollable as the weather. It is not a policy, in other words, but simply a large, generally benign fact.

Against this background the sudden, unprecedented success of the Border Patrol at slowing—indeed, almost halting—illegal Mexican immigration across the Rio Grande at El Paso, Texas, a major entry point, comes as something of a thunderbolt. On the one hand, it opens the possibility that immigration may become a policy again rather than a quasi-natural fact. On the other hand, it opens the way, paradoxically, to the acceptance, in some form, of Castañeda's otherwise unacceptable proposal.

From September 19 to October 2, 1993, the El Paso Border Patrol, under Chief Silvestre Reyes, quietly but suddenly closed the several breaches in the border fence that had been major entry points for illegal immigrants, and simultaneously instituted a strategic reform and redeployment of the patrol's forces. The reform was a sharp de-emphasis of the hot pursuit of illegal immigrants after they cross the border. The redeployment was a new concentration of agents along the borderline itself. Of 650 agents in the district, 400 were now deployed along the border; in the downtown El Paso area they were sta-

tioned in a line of sight, each to the next. At the start there were also temporary reinforcements from both the Border Patrol proper and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which has charge of a bridge where most legal entry occurs. The total additional cost of the two-week Operation Blockade, including repair of the fences and overtime, was only \$300,000. Shortly after the start of the operation Reyes announced that the new approach would continue indefinitely, without new funding, as Operation Hold the Line.

Hold the Line would have been a better name for the initial operation, which never sealed the border or halted legal permanent or temporary border crossing from Ciudad Juarez, just across the Rio Grande. The continuation of normal, peaceful interaction across a border regulated but not sealed only makes Reyes's results the more impressive. Apprehensions for illegal entry along the El Paso border have dropped to about 150 from an average daily level of 800 to 1,000. Since as many as half of all border crossers into El Paso come to work in greater El Paso, statistics for those going beyond El Paso by plane or train are of particular interest—and as it happens, those numbers are even more dramatic. According to John L. Martin, who last December published under the auspices of the Center for Immigration Studies the fullest account to date of the continuing operation, "Apprehensions resulting from train checks have decreased by 90 percent. Airport apprehensions, regularly numbering in the hundreds, and which hit a record level of 1,034 last July 4, are now averaging 8-15 per day."

Seventy to 75 percent of the citizens and legal residents of El Paso are of Hispanic descent, and mistaken arrests by the Border Patrol have resulted in a series of lawsuits, particularly in connection with Bowie High School, near the Rio Grande, where illegal border crossers reportedly have sought cover in the school crowd. Martin claims that this problem has now been all but eliminated.

Chief Reyes noted on November 8 that, since assuming the new operational deployment of deterrence rather than apprehension, there has not been a single new complaint from the public. He pointed out in a similar vein that there had not been a single shooting incident involving his forces since then, either.

(Continued on page 42)

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FATAL ATTRACTION THROUGH THE AGES

Are Stanley Kowalski and Blanche DuBois the Tennessee Williams Romeo and Juliet? You might ponder the question at this summer's Utah Shakespearean Festival, in Cedar City, where *A Streetcar Named Desire* is the lone native offering on a bill otherwise devoted to the Bard (June 23–September 3, box office 801-586-7878). Consider the sense of destiny common to the English play ("From forth the fatal loins of these two foes / A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life") and the American ("We've had this date with each other from the beginning!"). Consider the contrasting treatment of the costars. Blanche, like Romeo, is conceived for a virtuoso; both talk and talk,



From *Romeo and Juliet*

drunk on dreams (though his are sweet and hers are poisoned). Stanley, like Juliet, calls for a natural; looking the part is much more than half the battle, and stage exposure is brief. Granting the parallels, chalk up the shape of the Williams plot to the jaundiced view of his more cynical age. As for the use of the players, look to theatrical history. Shakespeare gave the hard work to the menfolk. He went easy (technically speaking) on the heroines, who were played by boys, less experienced in stagecraft and in life. By 1947 and *Streetcar*, the American tragedienne had won parity with her male counterpart—or even, as in Williams, blown him out of the water. —A.B.

MARK MORRIS ON THE GRAND SCALE



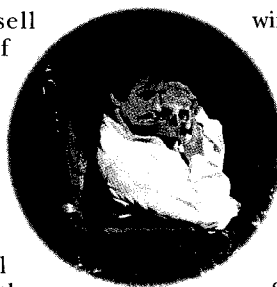
Mark Morris Dance Group

There are those who think *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* is Mark Morris's greatest work and one of the banner dances of our time. It is indeed large-scale—an evening-length production that requires 24 dancers, 45 singers, and a full orchestra. Choreographed in 1988, when the Mark Morris Dance Group had just begun its controversial three-year residency in Brussels, and set to Handel, *L'Allegro* interweaves two choreographic approaches, the narrative and the formal. When Morris illustrates the words in the libretto, he turns the stage into a pulsing, flowing *tableau vivant*: a hunt scene, the foliage, hounds, and panting fox depicted with childlike invention and delight. And though the watercolor simplicity of Morris's abstract line and circle dances strikes me as *too* simple, *L'Allegro*-lovers

see in those dances a utopian spirit of completion. Because of its size, *L'Allegro* has been performed in America only once (in New York City). But Boston's Dance Umbrella presents the work June 2–4 at the Wang Center. June 7–11 at the Emerson Majestic Theater, the company will appear in shorter Morris dances plus an Umbrella-commissioned premiere. For tickets call 617-931-ARTS. —L.J.

THE ROYAL BALLET AND ITS QUEEN

When Darcey Bussell lands from one of her sky-surfing, slow-motion leaps, you hear a plump thunk—an oddly soul-satisfying sound. When she bounces her legs apart into ballet's triangular *échappé*, she's monumental—the Eiffel Tower sunning itself. Both planted and plangent, liltingly pretty but with the pounce of a man, Bussell is a long-line ballet princess who wields her legs like silver scepters, never tipping her crown of calm. In fact, no one has danced with such depth and breadth since Suzanne Farrell, which explains Bussell's serious success last



Mayerling

THE SOUL OF WIT

At the close of every New York theater season we look back on a fleet of Hindenburgs that, pumped full of hot air, took off with fanfare and went down in flames. Thank heaven for an off-Broadway sleeper like *All in the Timing*: six nimble-minded one-acters at the John Houseman Theatre (tickets, 212-239-6200). *Words, Words, Words* presents monkeys at typewriters, caged to write *Hamlet*. *Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread* fits Robert Wilson's art on the head of a pin. *The Philadelphia* explicates metaphysical states such as the "Philadelphia"



From *Words, Words, Words*

("no matter what you ask for, you can't get it") and the "Cleveland" ("like death without the advantages"). Ah, the jokes! The generosity! The author is David Ives, who folds the content of a whole play into the space of a sketch. Time to join his fan club. —A.B.

Austin Baer is a New York-based writer. Laura Jacobs is editor in chief of Stagebill.

winter as a guest artist with the New York City Ballet. This summer, July 6 to July 19, Bussell assays Aurora when her home company, England's Royal Ballet, brings its new production of *The Sleeping Beauty* to the Metropolitan Opera House. Also on the bill is Sir Kenneth MacMillan's notorious *Mayerling*, a psychosexual love story that ends with a double suicide. (Meanwhile, the late MacMillan's last choreographic creation runs next door at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre: the mill-town dances for *Carousel*.) For information call 212-362-6000. —L.J.

Classical Music

BY AUSTIN BAER

JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

As everyone knows, anything goes on stage these days. A Noh *Lear*, *Don Giovanni* in Harlem, *Giselle* in a lunatic asylum? Why not? The really interesting question is less what the concept is than how it plays. Now Jonathan Miller—the tele-genic physician, comedian, pundit, and director who gave the world *Rigoletto* in Little Italy and a *Tosca* with Fascists—has taken his time machine to that most period-bound of operas, Richard Strauss's rococo *Der Rosenkavalier*. You remember the plot: the aristocratic, ineffably elegant Marschallin, past the first bloom of youth, loses her impeccably pedigreed teenage lover to the convent-bred ingénue daughter of a newly titled nouveau riche who intend-



Marschallin



The Baron

ed to marry her off (at the cost of a huge dowry) to a skirt-chasing boor of a country baron. You remember the look: powdered wigs, silks and satins. And surely you remember the bewitching perfume. Well, according to the reviews from London, where the Miller *Rosenkavalier* opened in February, we now find ourselves in 1911 (give or take), the year of the opera's world premiere. In place of tradition's sugar candy, Dr. Miller administers a rather bitter pill. No doubt some will balk, but such medicine could well give this candidate for embalming a brand new lease on life. American audiences may review the case at the Los Angeles Music Center Opera (May 29–June 12; for tickets call 213-365-3500).

GENERAL OF THE FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

Time was, the passion of cultured Russians for things French was all but proverbial. Early in this century the arrow of fascination pointed mostly the other way, as the triumphs in France of Diaghilev, Stravinsky, Pavlova, Nijinsky, and Chaliapin attest, to say nothing of Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Today the cross-cultural bond has a new champion in the conductor Valery Gergiev (pictured), music director of the Kirov Opera in St. Petersburg—so much so that the San Francisco Symphony has entrusted to him the entire symphonic component of this year's

French Festival (five programs, ten concerts). Prepare to be bewitched. Gergiev's luxurious yet refined sense of color, phrase, and texture is made to order for Berlioz, whose music dominates the festival.

His orchestration of Weber's *Invitation to the Dance* opens the pro-

ceedings on a rapt note, and three key works follow: the stunning, youthful cantata *Cléopâtre*; the hallucinatory *Symphonie fantastique*, still astonishing; and the gripping *La damnation de Faust*. Debussy receives his due with not only *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and *La mer* but also the comparatively neglected *Nocturnes*, with its haunting female chorus. And what of Ravel? Present and accounted for with *Shéhérazade*, the Piano Concerto in G, the *Rapsodie espagnole*, and the *Boléro*. Completing the lineup are Saint-Saëns, Gounod, Gluck, and Stravinsky, the last two counting for the nonce as French by adoption. (June 2–19; for schedule and tickets call 415-431-5400.)

TOTAL IMMERSION

If the brochure for the Oregon Bach Festival reads like a syllabus, make allowance for the venue: the University of Oregon in Eugene. Now in its 25th year, the two-week event combines high-luster concertizing with advanced training for budding musician-scholars. The two functions converge in a six-part, six-day encounter with J. S. Bach's towering *St. Matthew Passion*. Helmuth Rilling, the festival's founding conductor, introduces each segment and presides; the orchestra, soloists, and chorus are the festival regulars. The baton, however, is in the hands of maestros in the making, their appearances being in the nature of final exams. The learning experience for listeners should be no less intense. The biggest news this year, though, is the world premiere of *Litany*, by the austere



Conductor Helmuth Rilling

yet spiritually luminous Arvo Pärt, reportedly incorporating a twenty-four-part fugue. Though a noted recluse, the composer plans not only to attend the premiere but to join Rilling in public conversation. For further glimpses into the creative process, listeners may drop in on orchestra readings of brand-new pieces by emerging composers in residence. (June 24–July 9; for full schedule and tickets call 503-346-5666.)

Austin Baer is a New York-based writer.

THE PIANO PLAYS ON

Concert versions of movie scores are by no means unprecedented (think Prokofiev, think Walton). Still, such transformations do not occur every day. The latest is Michael Nyman's new Piano Concerto, cannibalized from his soundtrack for Jane Campion's *The Piano*, the CD of which (on the Virgin label) has not only topped the classical charts but also made the top quarter of Billboard's Top 200. The concerto makes its recorded debut, with Kathryn Stott and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, on Argo. Will it, too, climb the charts? Very possibly: the churning, aimless intensity of the film score remains. But to these ears, the power of Nyman's sounds lies less in the sounds themselves than in their match with Campion's pictures of brooding seas.

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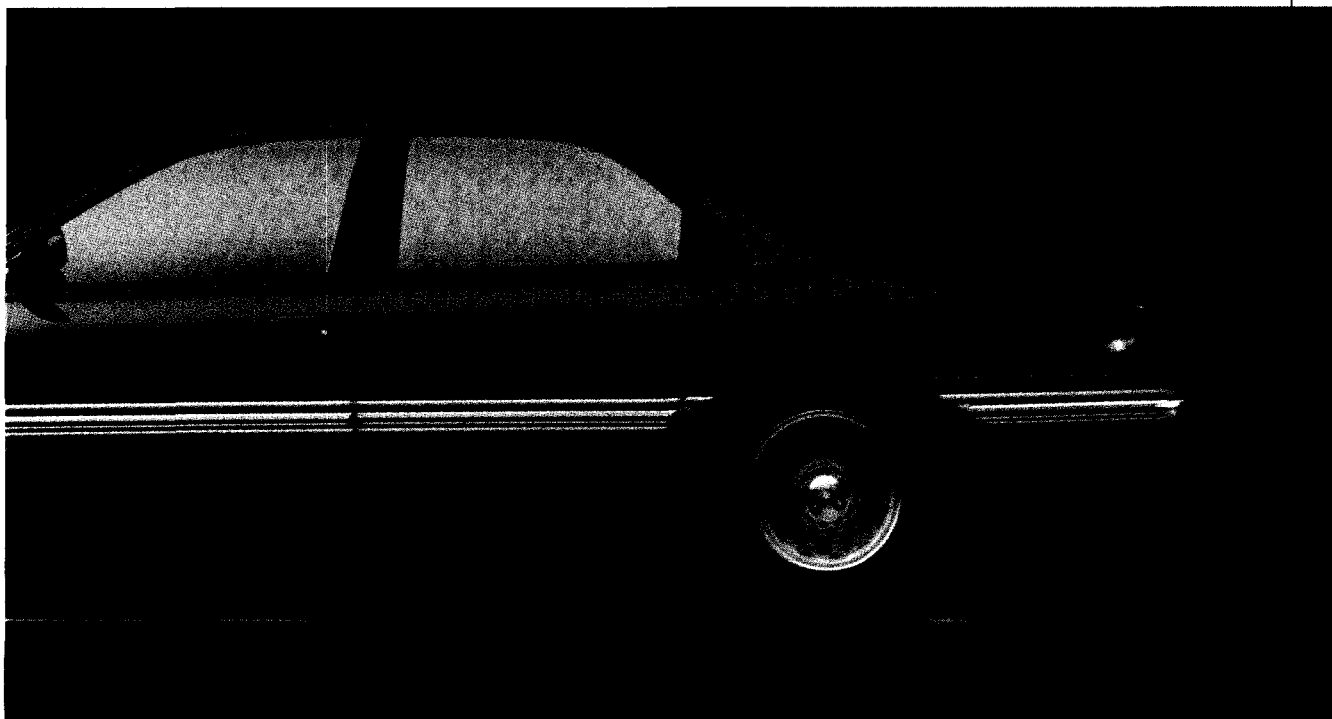


525i, the Infiniti J30t, and even the Lexus ES 300.* Then, on a slalom course, the Concorde made short work of less nimble cars. It outmaneuvered a Nissan Maxima, an Audi Quattro V-8, and an Infiniti Q45.* A feat made possible, in part, by the Concorde's "cab forward"

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Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

THE NEXT GENERATION

The World Saxophone Quartet was among the most stable groups in jazz until Julius Hemphill's departure, in 1990. Although some questioned its future without the man who provided the majority of its material, Arthur Blythe proved to be a compatible and effective replacement.

Now Blythe, too, has moved on, and his tenure can be viewed as the WSQ's era of collaboration. The band's last Elektra Nonesuch album, *Metamorphosis*, brought it together with African percussionists, and the new *Breath of Life* allows it to romp with a rhythm section and vocalist Fontella Bass through a blues-heavy program. The material plays to Blythe's direct, sweet-and-sour strengths, and solos like the one he delivers on "You Don't Know Me" show clearly enough why he will be missed.



World Saxophone Quartet

Along with impassioned guest appearances by Bass (who ignites the sanctified "Suffering With the Blues") and organist Amina Claudine Myers, Hamiett Bluiett's baritone sax dominates *Breath of Life*. Bluiett anchors the meaty ensembles, keeps his big horn limber on the samba "Deb," supports Bass with throaty obbligato on "Suffering," and does his own soul balladeering on "Song for Camille."

Oliver Lake and David Murray, the other original WSQ members, lead the group in different directions with their contributions. Alto saxophonist Lake recycles two of his old pieces for the most listener-friendly grooves, including the infectious reggae title tune. Murray contributes the "pure" saxophone-quartet pieces, and his "Picasso," with its honey-sweet interlocking ensembles and keenly balanced collective improvisation, reminds us why the WSQ became so important in the first place. —B.B.

Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe and CD Review.
Charles M. Young is a New York-based writer.

WOMEN ON THE VERGE

After five albums on Epic, numerous Grammy nominations, one Grammy Award ("Best Contemporary Folk Recording" in 1989, for *Indigo Girls*), more than three million albums sold, and lots of touring, the Indigo Girls appear poised for household-word status. The duo deserve it for their sixth album, *Swamp Ophelia* (pictured). Aptly named, it has a strong swamp feel, given the mostly minor-key approach to melody and the haunting accompaniment of the Girls' acoustic guitars and a truly stellar collection of backup musicians—Chuck Leavell on piano, Sara Lee on bass, Lisa Germano on mandolin, and the Roches singing background. As for *Ophelia*, the Girls certainly share her angst (an ines-



capable word in articles about them) and confusion about relationships (a great asset for college radio). Soprano Emily Saliers and alto Amy Ray expand into the realm of folk rock, starting slow and building to an all-electric assault in "Touch Me Fall." The song works surprisingly well as pure rock-and-roll aggression, but the main appeal remains the sweet vocal harmonies and contemplative lyrics that explore love, regrets, and reformist politics (the Indigo Girls are especially popular on the benefit circuit). The danger in folkie acts with similar introverted, bare-the-soul lyrics is that they'll topple into the abyss of preciousness and pathos. The Indigo Girls have seen the abyss and danced around the rim, but they haven't fallen in yet. —C.M.Y.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

The members of Live, all 1989 graduates of William Penn High School, in York, Pennsylvania, have been playing together since their eighth-grade talent show and embody all the virtues of the band approach to rock-and-roll, as opposed to the one-leader-and-a-bunch-of-hired-gun-musicians approach. Their ensemble playing has an unmistakable feel of organic synthesis. On their second album, *Throwing Copper* (Radioactive), singer, lyricist, and visionary Ed Kowalczyk displays phrasing and resonance beyond his years. In other words, the guy can really animate a melody, roughly in the voice range of Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, but with even more intensity and no celebration of despair. Heavily influenced by the pacifist philosopher Krishnamurti on Live's debut album, *Mental Jewelry*, Kowalczyk has opted for less explication of oral principles and more poetry this time around. A little indirection in the expression of eternal

truths—and a complete lack of self-righteousness—keep the band's youthful idealism in the realm of inspiration. Live has one of the most propulsive young rhythm sections around, and its guitar work is a model of balance. This is music for both contemplation and thrashing, and that's a bargain. Listen for "Selling the Drama," on college radio, and watch for the band's ongoing tour. —C.M.Y.



Members of Live

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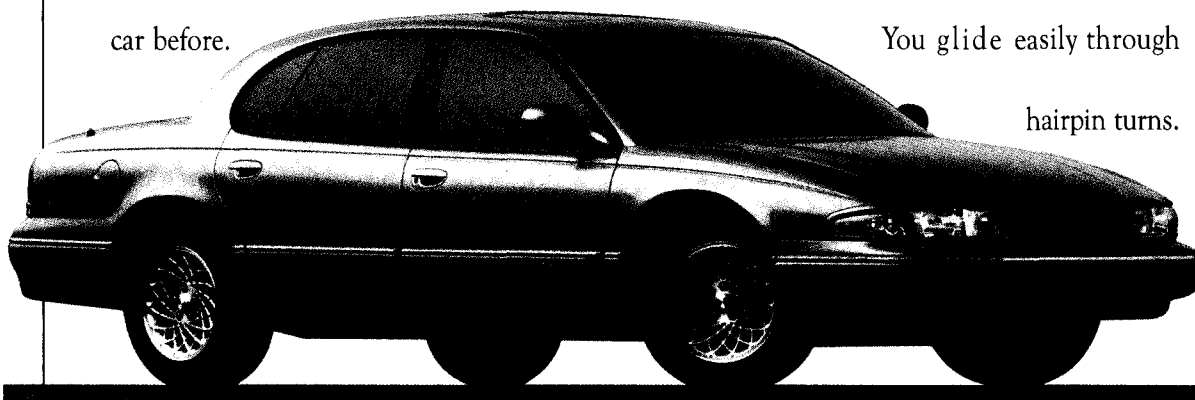
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(Continued from page 34)

Not in jest, Martin reports a new morale problem in the El Paso Border Patrol: the new techniques, substituting deterrence for pursuit, are so effective that the agents are bored.

Though no scientific opinion poll has been taken, the *El Paso Times* reported on September 23 that telephone calls to the newspaper were running ten to one in favor of the new policy. The Ciudad Juarez Chambers of Commerce and Industry did oppose it, and even called for a boycott of El Paso businesses. There was, briefly, a decline in trade at the downtown stores nearest the border, perhaps partly because of the misleading initial use of the word "blockade." Outlying stores were unaffected, however, and by October even the downtown stores were back to 85 to 90 percent of their pre-operation volume, with a substantial reduction in shoplifting and car theft.

The policy has detractors beyond the Ciudad Juarez Chamber of Commerce. The Roman Catholic bishop of El Paso opposes it. Residents of Ciudad Juarez accustomed to crossing freely into El Paso to work also oppose it. In one of three demonstrations hundreds of marchers chanted "We want to work." Shortly after the operation began, according to a report in the *Los Angeles Times*, it was denounced in a Mexican diplomatic note dispatched to the State Department. And yet, a bit surprisingly, the mayor of Ciudad Juarez was quoted as being in favor of it, perhaps because of the difficulty that the permanent residents of his city have had in coping with the criminal "coyotes" who prey upon prospective emigrants.

HOW important a precedent is El Paso? Operation Hold the Line is in effect along only a twenty-mile stretch of border separating El Paso from Ciudad Juarez, and attempted border crossings east or west of that twenty-mile stretch have risen slightly. Still, though smaller than Tijuana-San Diego, Ciudad Juarez-El Paso is of major importance. Its combined population comes to more than 1.5 million. The normal rate of legal border crossing there is estimated by the INS at 120,000 a day, or well over 35 million a year. If the approach taken in Operation Hold the Line has reduced the level of apprehensions for illegal border crossing—the nearest available objective mea-

sure of illegal traffic—at such a major entry point by more than 85 percent while keeping the border open to ordinary traffic, staying within the existing border-control budget, and lowering the level of violence and citizens' complaints, then this approach certainly merits serious consideration as a border-control model. Reyes's El Paso redeployment, as noted, brought 400 of the district's 650 agents to the border proper. Until recently the San Diego Border Patrol had fewer than a hundred of its 1,000 agents guarding the line. Last February, under public pressure, Attorney General Janet Reno announced that the San Diego contingent would gradually grow by another 400, and the commissioner of the INS, Doris Meissner, predicted a linked and again gradual shift from the inland apprehension of border-crossers to El Paso's approach, deterrence at the border itself.

Substituting deterrence for pursuit has been so effective in El Paso that the Border Patrol agents are bored

Reyes's success in El Paso may well have owed something to sudden implementation and surprise, however, and there will be no comparable surprise in San Diego. In addition, Martin, in a telephone interview, cited Reyes on the potential importance of a "desperation factor" in San Diego. Tijuana may differ from Ciudad Juarez, Martin explained, in that more of the migrants arriving there are simultaneously at the end of a long journey and at the end of their resources.

These are all important considerations, but they may mean only that if comparable results are ever achieved in San Diego, they will be achieved on a budget higher than Reyes's amazingly low one. Reyes has called into question the claim that controlling the border would be fiscally prohibitive if not technically impossible. He has also called into question the quite common claim that even if not technically impossible or fiscally prohibitive,

controlling the border would entail a level of brutal militarization that would appall the nation and the world. The image summoned up has been that of the Volkspolizei of the former East Germany, peering through the cross hairs of their high-powered rifles at fugitives creeping past the barbed wire. But Reyes, whom Martin describes as a quiet, low-key, un confrontational leader, has become dramatically more efficient at halting illegal immigration while all but eliminating violence by the Border Patrol agents under his command—and while winning, it would appear, warm support from a 70 percent Latino community with intimate ties to a sister city across the Rio Grande. The significance of this several-faceted success is hard to exaggerate.

BECAUSE of their intellectual investment in the thesis that the border cannot be policed, many immigration advocates will want to prove that Reyes's success is temporary or illusory—but they should consider the potential gain for the huge population of immigrants already in the United States should his success prove replicable and permanent. At stake, in brief, is another mass amnesty for illegal immigrants like the one that occurred in 1986.

At the moment there is absolutely no chance of a second such amnesty. On the contrary, American political leadership, spearheaded by Californians, is hell-bent on reducing, not enhancing, benefits to immigrants, which are now perceived narrowly as mere incentives for further immigration. In a way Castañeda saw this coming. Having proposed the mass legalization and enfranchisement of illegal immigrants, he wrote in *The California-Mexico Connection*,

There is no dispute that legalization poses costs and perils. The main danger lies in the incentive for future immigration and in the increased migratory flows that would undoubtedly result in the short term. But these costs are clearly no greater than the costs of the status quo, which threatens to tear California society apart.

But why should this incentive exist only in the short term? Worldwide, the supply of desperately poor potential migrants is essentially infinite. Illegal immigration across the U.S.-Mexican border is only a part of that much larger problem. It is the

most visible part, however; and unless the border can be controlled, the political trend will be precisely the opposite of what Castañeda would wish, as indeed it has been during the past year.

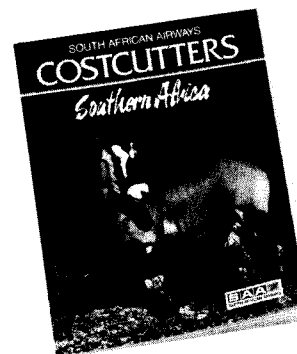
And yet this backlash is ultimately against a perceived and frightening loss of control, rather than against Mexicans as a racial or ethnic group. Accordingly, if legalization can be seen again as a measure promising a restoration of control—that is, if it can be made to function as something other than an incentive—then it may yet attract surprising support. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act was accepted as a once-only great compromise. The mass legalization of then-illegal immigrants was traded for the promise that a new program of employer sanctions would destroy the incentive for further mass immigration. That hope proved vain; but if it had never been entertained, IRCA would never have passed.

Until Americans have some assurance that a new mass legalization will not function as an incentive, they will never vote for it. It is not that the last foreigner to be naturalized must have been naturalized at the time of a new mass legalization. What is required is rather and only that control be so firmly and clearly re-established that decisions on admittance to the country—and admittance to the voting booth—will be at the discretion of the American host and not of the foreign guest. Employer sanctions alone, however severe, will never be enough to bring this about, but employer sanctions combined with truly effective policing of the border might be.

And in that case the IRCA compromise, now a bitter embarrassment to many who backed it at the time, may return in a new form. Immigration “restrictionists” will have to agree to legalize illegal immigrants who are already in the country. Immigration “admissionists” will have to surrender the notion that there is no such thing as an illegal immigrant (there are only “undocumented workers”) and agree to an effective, publicly backed Border Patrol assuring tight control over the largest single source of future illegal immigration.

Unlikely? No doubt—but surely no more unlikely than the indefinite maintenance of a status quo that nearly all parties to the immigration debate find unacceptable. ☛

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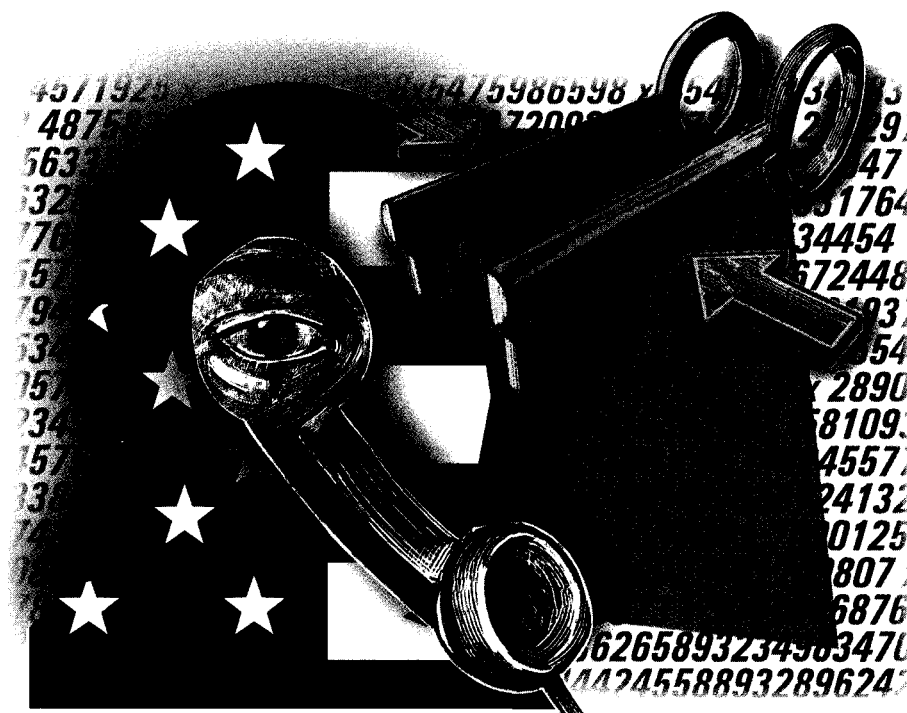


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Open Secrets

Why the so-called Clipper chip—vilified as a threat to the privacy of electronic communications—is not worth losing sleep over

THE political problem the Clinton Administration least expected was a war with America's high-tech community. Between Al Gore's patronage of the "information superhighway" and the Administration's various policies favoring the computer and semiconductor industries, Bill Clinton might have imagined that the Americans who build, buy, and use computers would be among his biggest fans.

Instead, since late last year electronic forums, which are the talk shows of the computer world, have rung with bitter denunciations of Clinton and Gore for having "betrayed" and "sold out" their high-tech constituency. The complaints have to do with two related proposals affecting privacy in the electronic age: for the use of a new encryption device called the Clipper chip, and for updating the law concerning wiretaps, through the Digital Telephony bill.

by James Fallows

The subjects of these proposals are highly technical, yet the debate about them has become as intense and polarized as those over school prayer and gun control. In one month this spring some 50,000 computer users endorsed a petition circulated on the Internet which denounced the Clipper-chip plan. "If this Clipper monster isn't stopped soon, we are going to witness the criminalization of anyone who insists on complete privacy of personal communications on computer networks," one wholly typical Internet message said. "Beating Clipper is a crucial step in freeing ourselves from all the dark possibilities of an authoritarian national-security state."

When I first heard about these plans, I was ready to go on the warpath alongside my fellow on-line habitués. But the more I have learned about the proposals, the less wrought-up I have become. The Clipper initiative, which has been the bet-

ter publicized of the two plans, seems to me to be foolish and misguided—but also quite easily thwarted by those who most oppose it. The Digital Telephony proposal, in comparison, seems more reasonable and balanced. Looked at closely, neither is the watershed in the history of American freedoms that the electronic community has made it out to be.

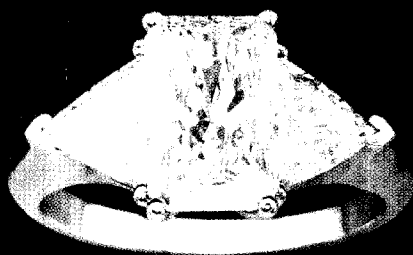
BEFORE going into the ugly to-and-fro over the Clipper proposal, let's consider the beautiful mathematical discoveries that have given rise to the whole debate.

The Clipper controversy concerns cryptography—putting messages into code. Codes have been around for about as long as people have been communicating, but until 1976 all codes shared one great flaw. Each relied on a secret "key," or coding method, with which the "plaintext" of the message could be encoded into "ciphertext" and then decoded into plaintext at the other end. The person sending the message had to agree beforehand with the person receiving it on what the key would be—references to pages in a book, a system of letter transposition, or one of countless other possibilities. The need for two or more people to agree ahead of time on a key created problems that have been the stuff of spy novels and war histories for hundreds of years: lost keys, stolen keys, counterfeit keys, keys that arrived after the message itself.

In 1976 Whitfield Diffie and Martin Hellman, both then at Stanford, wrote a paper proposing the radically different concept of a "public key" coding system, in which sender and receiver need never discuss a secret key. In 1978 Ronald Rivest, Adi Shamir, and Leonard Adleman, then all at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published a paper showing for the first time (at least in unclassified literature) exactly how a public-key system might work. This paper, which formulated what has come to be known as the RSA system, and the Diffie and Hellman paper before it are routinely referred to as being the "most innovative" or "most profound" steps in modern cryptography, because they eliminated the vulnerability that had afflicted all previous codes.

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my hands trembled. This time, hers will."*

*I'll always remember that face.
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so far together, perhaps it's time to
celebrate that love, again, with a
diamond as exceptional as our love.*



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Exceptional diamond.*

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The basic mathematical idea behind public-key systems is that of the "one-way function." One-way functions are those that are much easier to perform in one direction than the other. Most people can quickly figure out, with a calculator or just a pencil, what 7^6 , or $7 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7$, equals. Very few people can quickly figure out what the sixth root of 117,649 is. (It's 7.)

The same principle applies even to powerful computers, with allowances for their far greater speed. They can add, subtract, and multiply numbers much more quickly than they can calculate a number's factors. The simplest calculator can determine almost instantaneously that $987 \times 1,013 = 999,831$. But if a computer starts with the number 999,831, it will take time for the machine to determine, through trial and error, that the number can be evenly divided by 987 and 1,013.

As numbers become larger, this period of time becomes significant. When numbers become very large, the slow part of a one-way function becomes so slow that completing it is virtually impossible. For example: if two prime numbers, each 100 digits long, are multiplied together, the result will be a number about 200 digits long. A computer can easily calculate that enormous product. But if it starts with the same 200-digit number and tries to find what those 100-digit factors are, the process will be much slower. (As a reminder: a prime number has only two factors, 1 and the number itself. Therefore a 200-digit number that is the product of two prime numbers will have only four factors: 1, the number itself, and the two prime numbers.) Finding the factors of such a 200-digit number on a modern top-speed supercomputer would require not milliseconds or minutes but at least several centuries. The task is, in computer terms, "computationally infeasible."

What Diffie, Hellman, and the three MIT authors proposed was that numbers hidden by computational infeasibility could serve as a kind of secret key in a variety of ways. The key is not really secret, of course, since with infinite time an outsider could calculate what the hidden numbers were. But no outsider would live long enough to see the results, so in practical terms the code is secure. In the RSA system, for example, messages can be decoded by anyone who knows the

two secret 100-digit prime numbers that were multiplied together to produce each recipient's 200-digit public key. (In the RSA system, to simplify slightly, each person chooses his own secret prime numbers, multiplies them together, and reveals the product as his "public key." Anyone wanting to send a message to that person applies this public key in an encryption formula. The original prime numbers are then used in a decryption formula to produce the original message.) Only the intended recipient knows the original prime numbers; no one else can figure them out from the public key.

For the world's cryptographers, the public-key concept was exhilarating. For the world's governments, its implications were more complicated. Public-key cryptography raised for the first time the prospect that completely secure communications systems might be available to almost anyone—including parties whose conversations a government would like to overhear. Various U.S. government agencies have long been confident of their ability to break a code if they really need to. Now officials became concerned that as public-key coding programs became cheap and widely available, the government would lose its ability to hear what other governments, and in certain cases its own citizens, were saying.

Two branches of the U.S. government were most immediately concerned: the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which has relied on wiretaps for domestic law enforcement, and feared that criminals would start scrambling all transmissions; and the National Security Agency, which exists in part for the purpose of intercepting telephone and broadcast transmissions around the world. (By law the NSA, like the Central Intelligence Agency, is not supposed to intercept data within the United States. Because the NSA's operations are more secret than those of any other major government agency, there is no way to be sure that it has followed this rule.)

The NSA, which arguably controls the greatest concentration of computing power in America, was the main bureaucratic force behind the Clipper chip. It feared that sooner or later public-key coding systems would become cheap and commercially available, so that citizens and businesses would routinely use them to scramble their telephone calls and data

transmissions. This in turn would make it nearly impossible for the government to decode messages it intercepted; not even the NSA's computers could break the public keys. To forestall this possibility, the NSA, with the eventual support of the FBI, threw its weight behind the Clipper proposal—for a government-approved encryption system that might prevent the spread of public-key codes. Early last year the Clinton Administration embraced this plan.

The Clipper chip, officially known as the MYK-78 device, is programmed by Mykotronx Inc., of California. Telephones and modems that meet the Clipper standard come with this chip built in. Clipper phones scramble messages not according to public-key systems but through a secret coding algorithm called Skipjack. Skipjack would work with several "keys," including unique numbers built into the chip supplied with each telephone, to produce what the government claims is virtually unbreakable code.

The classified nature of the Clipper-Skipjack coding system is one big cause of complaint in the high-tech world, which teems with people who believe that they can find the secret flaw in the code any big bureaucracy creates. But the real outrage about Clipper stems from another feature: its "key escrow" plan.

Unlike scrambled messages produced by public-key systems, which for all practical purposes are impossible for anyone except the recipient to understand, the scrambled messages produced by Clipper phones are vulnerable to anyone who somehow obtains their codes, including the ID number built into each phone. Under the Clipper plan the federal government will maintain a master list of ID numbers for all Clipper devices ever sold. Each number—which is, in effect, the key to its phone's Clipper code—will be split in two, and each half will be "escrowed" by a government agency. In the right circumstances—namely, the production of a wiretapping warrant—the two halves will be reunited and the government will be able to intercept and understand everything said on that phone. As Whitfield Diffie said of the Clipper system soon after it was announced, "The effect is very much like that of the little keyhole in the back of the combination locks used on the lockers of schoolchildren. The children open the locks with the

combinations, which is supposed to keep the other children out, but the teachers can always look in the lockers by using the key."

That the government will have long-term possession of all secret Clipper keys is the reason the NSA and the FBI favored the proposal—and also the reason that nearly all of the high-tech community lined up against it. Privacy advocates were upset enough by the idea that the government would retain the keys. Even worse was the possibility that the bureaucrats guarding the keys could be bribed to turn them over to criminals or to foreign governments, which could then listen in on all supposedly "secure" conversations. (The arrest of Aldrich Ames, the alleged mole in the CIA, came in the middle of the Clipper debate.) Companies that make computers, modems, and telephone systems have unanimously opposed the Clipper plan. They say that as technology has evolved toward international standards, it has grown complicated and costly to make two different versions of all equipment—one with Clipper, for sales in America, and one without Clipper, for export. (Customers in, say, France or China would not be eager to buy scrambling equipment to which the U.S. government permanently held the keys.)

Nonetheless, the Clipper plan required no legislation, and early this year the Administration issued the orders putting it into effect. Clipper now exists as a standard for government contracts and purchases. Most of the secure, or encrypted, communications equipment sold in this country is sold to federal agencies (the military, the intelligence services, and law-enforcement divisions). Henceforth these agencies will not buy secure systems unless they are based on the Clipper chip.

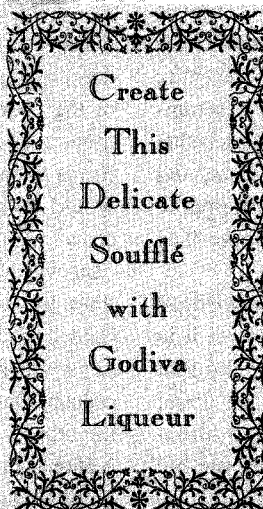
WAS this a wise decision? No. Is this the end of American civil liberties? I think not. The very trait that makes me wish the government had not adopted the Clipper standard also means that Clipper is not worth getting upset about.

This trait is the voluntary nature of the Clipper scheme. From now on, anyone who talks on a government-owned secure phone will be talking on Clipper, but no one else is obliged to use a Clipper

I N N O V A T I V E S P I R I T S

When was the last time you tried making a soufflé? Or even ate a soufflé? Although no dessert is more elegant, a soufflé can be difficult and rich. But not this one. If you own an eggbeater or a mixer, this recipe is foolproof. And chocolate cake or real chocolate truffles are far more caloric than

these divine puffs of air, gooey with melting bits of chocolate and scented with Godiva Liqueur. The chef is Allen Susser, a master of the new Miami cuisine, with its Southwestern, Caribbean, and Cuban touches. This can stretch to serve four, but you might want to share it with just one friend.



Godiva Liqueur Chocolate Truffle Soufflé

For 2-4:

3 jumbo eggs, separated
2 tablespoons flour
1 1/2 tablespoons butter, softened
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon vanilla
3 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons cocoa
1 tablespoon Godiva Liqueur
2 tablespoons semi-sweet chocolate pieces

Using a wooden spoon, combine the flour and 1 tablespoon of butter, beating until it forms a lump and comes off the sides of the bowl.

In a medium pot heat the milk with 1/2 teaspoon vanilla for five minutes, until it comes to a simmer. Mix in the flour-butter mixture and beat with a wire whisk until it dissolves and the milk begins to thicken. Continue to cook for two minutes, folding the mixture with a rubber

spatula until it is smooth and shiny. Remove from heat and pour into the bowl of an electric mixer. Beat at low speed, adding the egg yolks one at a time and then the sugar.

Once the mixture has cooled, mix the remaining vanilla, 1 tablespoon cocoa, and the Godiva Liqueur into the soufflé base. In a separate bowl whip the egg whites only until they form soft, not stiff, peaks. Gently fold egg whites into the soufflé base in two batches.

Brush a straight-sided eight-inch baking dish that is at least four inches high with the remaining butter and dust it with sugar, knocking out the excess sugar. Ladle the soufflé base into the dish until half full. Drop in the chocolate pieces. Fill the soufflé dish to the rim with soufflé mix. Bake in a preheated oven at 375° for 30 minutes. Dust with cocoa powder and serve immediately.



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phone. Nor is anyone forbidden to develop, sell, or use other encryption schemes. The three inventors of the RSA code, for example, have formed a company, RSA Data Security, that sells public-key coding programs for less than \$500. Americans are as free to use them as they were before the jackboot of Clipper crashed down.

Both parties to the dispute had reasons not to emphasize the voluntary nature of Clipper. For Clipper's proponents, this was the obvious, gaping flaw in the entire scheme. The stated reason for a scrambling chip that permits wiretapping is that otherwise terrorists, drug dealers, and other criminals might use untappable scrambling schemes. With Clipper they still can.

The government at least acknowledged this objection, and tried to answer it in two ways. The first was to argue that most criminals would never hear about Clipper chips, or would forget about them when they were planning the big heist. "Thank God most criminals are stupid!" Jim Kallstrom, the FBI's special agent in charge for New York, told me in March. "If the smartest segment of the population ever went into crime, we would really have a problem. Will some criminals catch on to the system, and buy their encryption from, let's say, Israel? Yes. Will that be a problem? Yes. But it will be a substantially smaller problem than if we didn't do anything."

The government's other response has been to emphasize its ability to "make markets." If big companies are producing Clipper because that's all they use when doing business with the government, then in the long run Clipper encryption will crowd out rival schemes. Apart from the government itself, the biggest customers for coding systems today are banks and credit-card companies, which use encryption to safeguard the billions of financial transactions they handle each day. By establishing Clipper as a standard, the government hopes to keep encryption, especially public-key systems, from becoming so cheap and convenient that anyone can walk into a Radio Shack and buy a perfectly secure phone. This attempt to shut off the growth of a market enrages many of Clipper's foes—but its very indirectness illustrates the limits of Clipper's effects. It is guaranteed to be least effective against the most serious

criminal opponents, such as state-sponsored terrorist rings that will not be limited to what they can find at Radio Shack.

Yet Clipper's opponents have also downplayed the voluntary factor, because it makes adoption of the system seem less nightmarish. When pressed on this point, they have usually reverted to the "slippery slope" argument: today Clipper is voluntary, tomorrow it will be mandatory—and all other coding schemes will be outlawed. There is no peacetime precedent to suggest that Congress would pass, or the courts uphold, such a mandatory measure, with sweeping controls on forms of speech. The likelihood of abuse would be reduced if Clipper's "key escrow" plan were changed in one significant way. Under current Clipper guidelines, the two agencies each designated to hold half the components of the secret keys will both be part of the executive branch. One is the Treasury Department; the other is the Commerce Department's National Institute of Standards and Technology. On familiar separation-of-power grounds, it would be safer for one of the "escrow agents" to be part of the judicial system, insulated from direct executive control. Those who are worried about Clipper no matter who its escrow agents are can and should start using some other encryption scheme.

CALMING down about Clipper might also keep the hyperbole of the battle from spilling over onto the Digital Telephony bill. Although this proposal's name sounds futuristic, the proposal itself is principally an attempt to maintain the wiretapping powers the police and the FBI have had for more than twenty-five years.

Under the Safe Streets Act of 1968 as amended in 1970, local telephone companies must cooperate with lawful wiretap requests from the FBI. Most states have passed laws based on this act, setting similar standards of their own for legal wiretaps. Law-enforcement officials emphasize the many hurdles they must surmount before a judge grants such a request. The police or the FBI must show probable cause to suspect a crime, and demonstrate that all other investigative possibilities have been exhausted. Because of these requirements, fewer than 1,000 wiretap requests are granted each year.

According to the FBI, the conversion of telephone systems to digitally switched networks and the adoption of call forwarding and the like make it increasingly difficult to carry out lawful wiretap orders. Older phone systems had access points that police could use to put a tap on a single line; this was often as simple as attaching two alligator clips to a telephone wire. Newer systems lack simple mechanical access points and will become increasingly difficult to tap as time goes on. Therefore the FBI contends that for purely technical reasons, rather than for legal or political cause, the police are losing the ability to tap phones. The Digital Telephony bill would require telephone systems to build in the means for tapping on whatever new equipment they introduce.

Like any other on-line habitué, I am unenthusiastic about the whole idea of wiretaps. I realize that FBI Director Louis Freeh has himself sounded hyperbolic in making the case for the bill ("Without a new statute, law enforcement at the federal, state, and local level will be crippled," and so on). Yet I also recognize that no one could make a political or legal case that the wiretap powers granted since 1968 have been so grossly abused that they must now be revoked. These powers have, after all, been in place through the worst of the Vietnam War years, Richard Nixon's rise and fall from power, much of the Cold War, and the heyday of Oliver North, without leaving any powerful evidence that they have brought us noticeably nearer a national police state. (The opponents of the Digital Telephony bill also say that it would make too easy the collection of information about individual calling patterns, paving the way for Big Brother-style surveillance. Yet the bill would not at all relax the legal controls on how such information is collected or used.)

If the current ability of the police to tap phones is wrong, then this power should be withdrawn the normal way, by changing laws—not through the back door, as an unintended consequence of a technical change. So far the evidence suggests that the police have on the whole used the power responsibly. Therefore they deserve to retain it, under similar legal controls, through the Digital Telephony bill.

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Left to right: Sunil Velagapudi, Robin Watkins, Kristin Bardwell.



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Play and Replay

*Ontario's Stratford Festival
offers total immersion in theater*

WHEN I found myself rehearsing my remarks in the shower, I realized that perhaps I was taking my assignment, to lead a discussion of the production of *King John* at Ontario's Stratford Festival, too seriously. Nonetheless I continued, telling myself that once the six of us were seated around the breakfast table, there would be little time for restructuring arguments. I thought that after making a general observation that the company had performed well in this, its

by Gene Burns

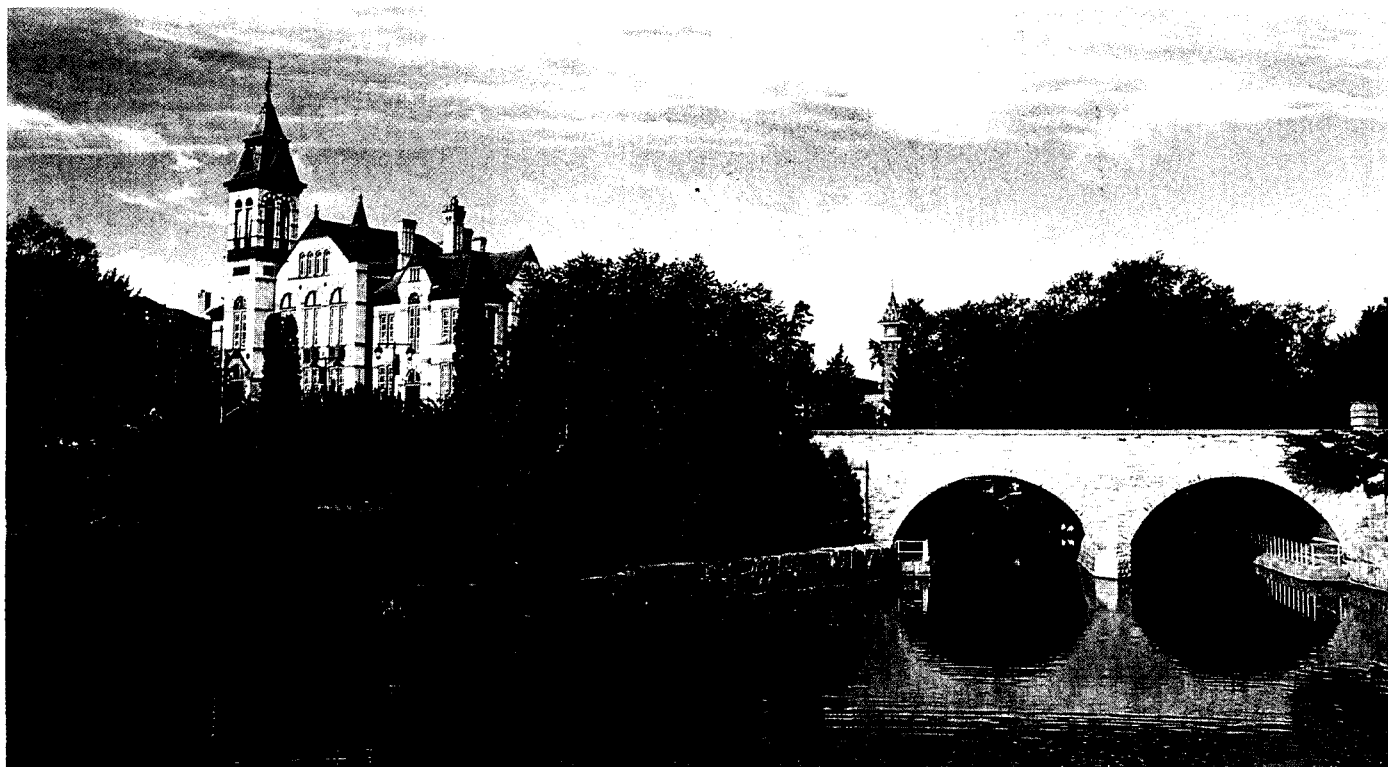
first effort with Shakespeare's *King John* since 1974, I would bring up the perennial topic of the use of alternate-period costumes. Should not a play set at the end of the twelfth century be staged in the dress of that period? What was the point of dressing King John and his fellow characters in high Edwardian or low Victorian?

But when the discussion opened, one man in the group couldn't wait to talk about the thrust stage of the Tom Patterson Theatre (named for the festival's founder),

where the play was being presented. Long and narrow, the stage extends three quarters of the depth of the auditorium, almost splitting the room in two. In a tone that made it clear he was not happy with this innovation, the man exclaimed, "What about the stage?" And we were off.

We were six very different people sharing the Cottage at 66 Queen, a bed-and-breakfast; assembled around the elegant table of our host, David Lester, we enjoyed eating fresh fruit, drinking coffee and tea, munching "bakes," and discussing the merits or lack thereof of the previous night's performance. Only four of us had seen that production, but no matter: the other two had seen things produced at the Tom Patterson and were eager to participate.

This breakfast debate suggests both the joys of good repertory theater and the enduring charm of Stratford, Ontario, and its annual festival, now (through November 13) in its forty-second season. Indeed, I would argue that choosing an intimate B&B rather than a larger hotel helps one partake of the Stratford Festival experience. This experience encompasses far more than just traveling to Stratford and seeing plays. There are three performance



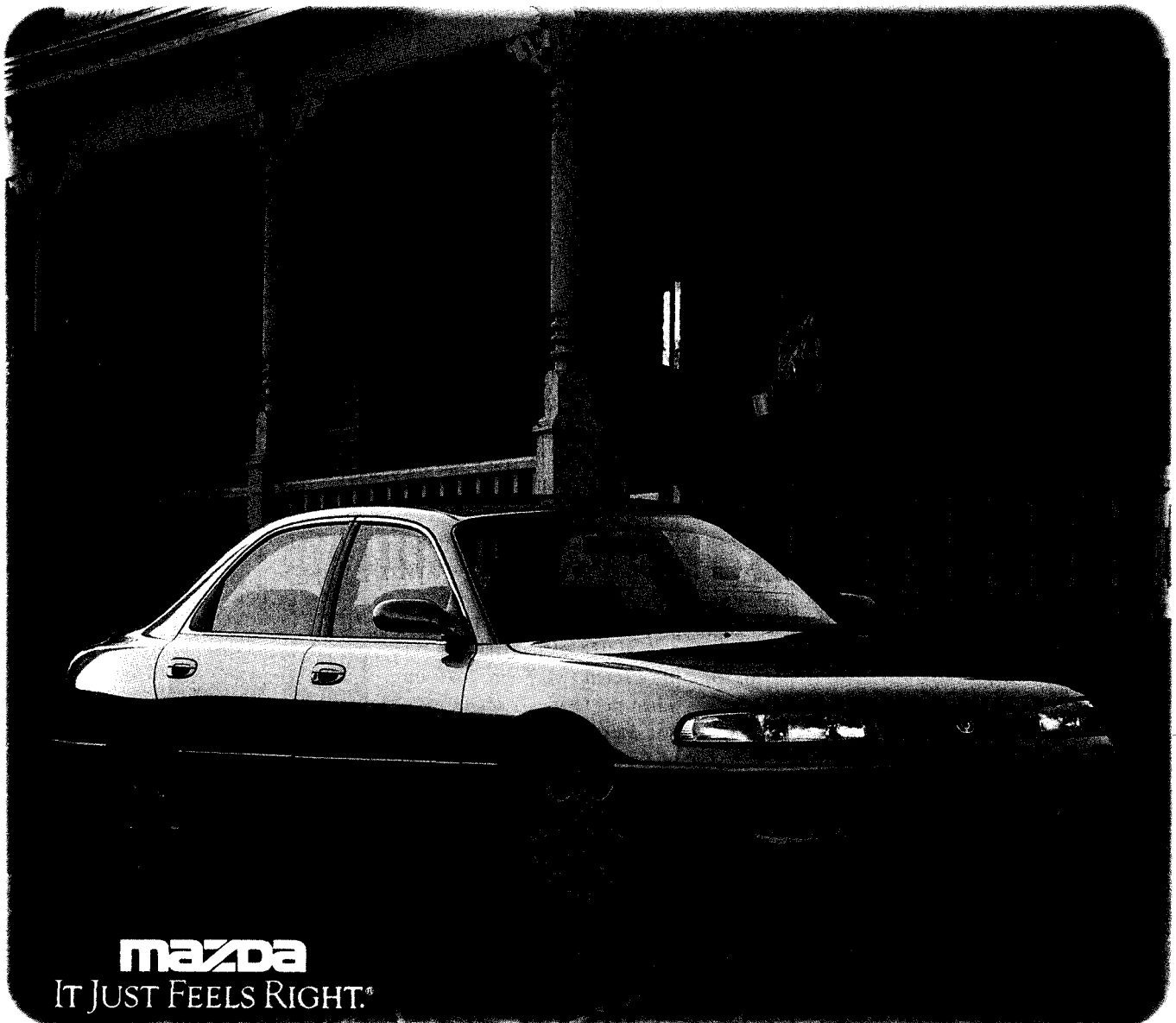
So lovely and so temperate: the Avon River glides through downtown Stratford, past the city's courthouse

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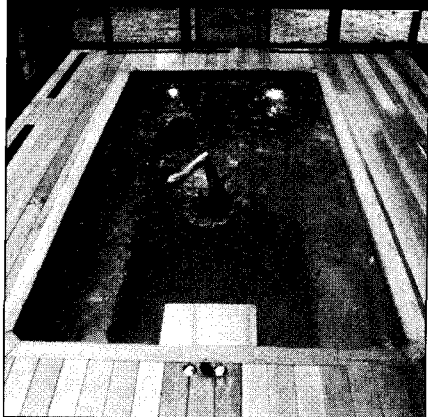


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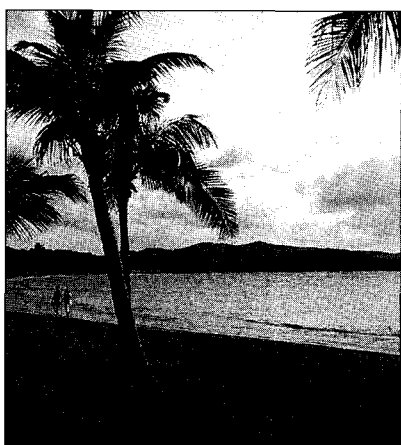
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venues in Stratford—the 2,300-seat Festival Theatre and the smaller Tom Patterson and Avon theaters—and in the same way that the thrust stage dominates its theater, the festival permeates the community, making all of Stratford a stage.

Everything from cutesy Shakespeare-related names of dishes on

local menus to the winding presence of the Avon River reminds one that this is not just another industrial city in southwestern Ontario. Since the festival's heady beginnings, in July of 1953, with a production of *Richard III* starring Alec Guinness, Stratford has gradually attracted the largest repertory company in North America. To no one's regret, plays are no longer exhibited in a tent; to mixed reviews, what was once called the Stratford Shakespearean Festival has enlarged its vision.

On my friend's and my most recent visit we saw a well-staged revival of *Gypsy*, an effective and engaging masked version of Euripides' *The Bacchae*, a strangely costumed *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the aforementioned *King John*. In addition, the festival had invited Christopher Plummer to present his one-man show, "A Word or Two, Before You Go," which played to a packed house; many in attendance had seen Plummer in his early years as a member of the company. Had time permitted, we could also have seen *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, *The Mikado*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Wingfield Trilogy*, *Fair Liberty's Call*, and *The Illusion*. But though we acted like addicts, running off to Toronto (a scant two hours east) on Monday, when the festival's stages were dark, to see *Miss Saigon* in the new Princess of Wales Theatre (it has, alas, since eliminated Monday shows), there are limits to one's theater appetite. One could stay in Stratford for two or three weeks and see all the plays, but that might be too much of a good thing. Besides, there are other things to see in and around Stratford.

For example, antique shops abound in the community of Shakespeare. Local crafts at reasonable prices hide in Bayfield, on the shores of Lake Huron. To be sure, there is kitsch—but on our most re-



cent visit I found a turn-of-the-century Bohemian glass decanter with extraordinary, creatively designed glasses for a price substantially less than I would have paid at home. Repertory theater by definition allows a visitor great flexibility in scheduling, so excursions to places such as Shakespeare and Bayfield are

quite easily worked into a stay. A thriving, quaint Mennonite community in St. Jacobs holds a huge and crowded Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday market. There's a farmers' market in Stratford itself, too, and though it is smaller, it still affords many choices. Our excursion to it turned up a large, yeasty rye loaf, farm-made summer sausage, and swiss cheese, which, with the addition of Perrier, we converted into a lovely picnic on Tom Patterson Island, in the Avon River, before the matinee of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Incidentally, the island, our bed-and-breakfast, and the theater that staged our play that afternoon were all within easy walking distance of one another.

IN Stratford and environs you can eat grandly or simply. In either case, informality of dress being the order of the day, you can also eat comfortably. After the



The Cottage at 66 Queen. Above, the Festival Theatre—no longer a tent

performance that followed the picnic, we moved to the opposite extreme for dinner, having reserved a table at Rundles, arguably the best restaurant in town. We walked to the restaurant along the river. The pre-theater rush was over, and the restaurant had settled into calm. Rundles is good anytime but best when the meal can proceed at leisure. The room's design

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THE WILD EAST

by SEYMOUR M. HERSH

Organized crime has Russia even more firmly in its grip than has been reported. Lawlessness has made Americans in Moscow fear for their lives, thrown obstacles in the way of businesses both foreign and domestic—and eroded the government's control over its nuclear weapons and materials

A DEATH IN MOSCOW

ON November 13, 1993, Michael Dasaro was brutally murdered in his apartment in a fashionable neighborhood in central Moscow, a ten-minute walk from the American embassy. Dasaro was on the verge of being a classic American success story. He grew up poor and streetwise in a public-housing project near Boston and managed to escape, with the aid of a scholarship, to Harvard University, where he became immersed in Russian studies. It seemed inevitable, after his graduation in 1981, that he would find his way to the Soviet Union and put his love of Russian culture and his fluency in the language to work. By the late 1980s he was a valued and much respected contract employee in the economics section of the U.S. embassy in Moscow. Last fall he was hired—at high pay—by one of the many American accounting companies now administering State Department contracts and Agency for International Development (AID) privatization programs throughout Russia and the former Soviet republics.

Dasaro was the first American citizen with direct ties to



the embassy to be murdered since the era of Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* began, in the mid-1980s. American officials who were sent to the scene took a series of gruesome photographs depicting the disarray of his apartment, which had been stripped of all valuables, including a computer, television set, and stereo, and the bloody bathtub in which Dasaro's body, wearing only shorts, had been found. It seemed obvious that Dasaro was yet another victim of Moscow's criminal element.

The Moscow police nonetheless refused to rule out the possibility that Dasaro had died of a heart attack. The *Moscow Times*, citing Russian autopsy findings, reported that Dasaro, who was thirty-five years old at the time of his death, was suffering from a rare heart disease known as cardiomyopathy. This statement and others like it were left unchallenged by top American officials in Moscow, to the dismay of Dasaro's former associates in the embassy and elsewhere.

Dasaro's death has made it impossible to continue to ignore the penetration of organized crime into all aspects of Russian life, and the fact that American citizens are increasingly being targeted.

The exponential growth of organized crime in Russia is not only an issue of personal safety and economics—it is becoming an issue of national and international security. The criminal element in Russia is now in the process of hijacking the state, and is threatening to erode the government's control over its stockpile of 15,000 tactical nuclear warheads and its hundreds of tons of weapons-grade plutonium and enriched uranium.

Two Presidents, George Bush and Bill Clinton, have supported Boris Yeltsin, the President of Russia, although the Yeltsin government has been unable to deal with crime. American policymakers have no illusions about the lack of order in Russia, but how to address it poses a classic dilemma: is the cure—more police and state control over day-to-day life and society—worse than the disease?

Furthermore, some Clinton Administration experts question how extensively the United States can intervene legitimately in Russian affairs. As these experts may know, the Bush Administration chose to play a major and until now secret role in helping Yeltsin to emerge as a hero in his first major crisis—the August, 1991, coup attempt against Mikhail Gorbachev. Bush's clandestine support for Yeltsin may later have helped blind him and his senior aides to the dangers posed by organized crime in Russia—dangers that leave citizens at risk of being robbed or murdered, and nuclear warheads and enriched materials at risk of being sold to outsiders in Russia's flourishing black market.

. . .

Dasaro became invaluable to embassy officials, most of whom could not match his fluent Russian, for his knowledge of Moscow and its leadership. Sometimes his access was discomforting to the men at the top. Dasaro's former colleagues are quick to tell of the occasion, after a critical political meeting in 1990, when an embassy official beseeched Yeltsin, then the president of the Russian Federation, for information. "Why don't you talk to your economic counselor?" Yeltsin replied, giving Dasaro a title he did not have. "I already gave everything to him." When in 1991 a devastating fire swept

through the embassy, Dasaro insisted on staying behind with John W. Blaney, then the embassy's minister-counselor for economic affairs, to secure safes and classified documents. With the flames approaching, he calmly put together a crude ladder that enabled the last group of Americans to climb over the embassy wall to safety. "He was a hero that day," Blaney says. A wire-service photograph of Dasaro scaling the embassy wall made front pages all over America.

Dasaro was also a good friend to the many young Ameri-



cans just out of college who were hired to replace Soviet employees after a spy scare in the mid-1980s. Like them, he was deeply troubled by the extent to which organized crime had made inroads into all aspects of Russian life—including AID's multimillion-dollar effort to change state-run enterprises into private businesses, known as the privatization program. "Michael was an expert on crime and privatization," recalls Kim Gamel, who in the early 1990s was a fledgling reporter for the English-language *Moscow Tribune* and is now a graduate student in journalism at Northwestern University. "He had contacts and he knew that the criminal element had taken over privatization." Dasaro was constantly telling her about various black-market schemes, Gamel says, but not in detail: "I don't think he thought I could handle it journalistically, and he was probably right."

The death of the man who knew the most about the streets shook the embassy. Those who knew Dasaro found themselves "unable to work, just sitting around, without words," a foreign-service officer wrote in a letter to a former colleague. "He was one of us and his murder sends a shocking message: we are safe no longer."

Dasaro's friends knew that he had been planning to buy a used car—a business transaction, like many in Moscow, that could be made only with cash, and lots of it. Everyone in the embassy understood that any American in Russia who was withdrawing a large amount of cash from a bank or arranging for a cash advance was likely to become a target. The Moscow mafia is known to have bribed and extorted its way into most major banking and lending institutions to gain access to individual and corporate accounts. The Americans in

hard fact for many Americans in and out of Russia. A former U.S. ambassador to Russia told me that he had been distressed to hear of Dasaro's murder and had been advised, upon checking with senior officials in Washington, that "it was a gay thing—and that's the reason they didn't go into it further." Dasaro's former colleagues in the embassy "didn't want to embarrass" his family by probing too deeply, the ex-ambassador added.

Dasaro's many woman friends insisted in interviews that he was not gay. But one American official who formerly worked in Russia and who is himself homosexual told me that Dasaro did indeed frequent gay bars in Moscow. The fact that someone is gay, of course—whether or not Dasaro was gay—does not justify indifference to a murder.

As of mid-March the State Department was continuing to cite its unwillingness to intervene in Russian affairs, telling journalists who asked that the Russian police were "still conducting a criminal investigation" into Dasaro's death. The United States would not take any action, a spokesman added, until that inquiry was completed. Re-

porters were told once again that the initial results of the Russian autopsy indicated that Dasaro died of a heart attack.

Dasaro's father, Charles, a retired fisherman in Everett, Massachusetts, insisted that the body be returned to Boston for further autopsy. It arrived in December with much of the heart missing, making it impossible for Gerald Feigin, a state medical examiner who was retained by the family, to determine the cause of death. In a telephone interview Feigin did not challenge the right of the Russian pathology team to remove essential organs, but he expressed bitterness about the initial refusal of the Russian government to provide slides of relevant heart tissue. The slides did not arrive until February, he said, and showed no signs of heart disease.

INSIDERS' ADVICE: STAY AWAY

THOSE former colleagues who are willing to be quoted view the embassy's hands-off attitude toward Dasaro's murder as an attempt to hide the impact of organized crime on day-to-day life in Russia and the former Soviet republics. They say that many of AID's contract em-



the embassy also understood that one never declared significant amounts of cash upon entering the country: many airport customs officials were known to be in the employ of the mob, and to turn over the names of potential robbery victims. One embassy official who visited Dasaro's apartment on the day after the murder told me that the ransacking of the apartment had stopped abruptly, indicating that whatever was being sought—such as a large sum of money—had been found. Many of his friends in the embassy believe that Dasaro was murdered for his money by a well-organized criminal group.

Within a week another explanation for Dasaro's death emerged in the Moscow press: Dasaro had been a member of the underground gay community in Moscow and had been slain after a raucous party in his apartment got out of control. In late November the Associated Press, quoting a gay-rights group, reported that a special Moscow police unit, armed and wearing masks, had raided a gay bar in downtown Moscow on the day after Dasaro's death, telling patrons that "one of yours has been killed." That suggestion—that Dasaro's death was linked to his secret ties to the gay community—became a



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ployees in Russia have been told not to discuss the murder with outsiders—and have also been instructed to buy steel doors for their apartments and to take more precautions when traveling alone at night.

Last year Karen Salz left Moscow, where she had worked as a contract employee in the embassy's cultural-affairs office, to attend the graduate school of business at the University of California at Los Angeles. Her excellent Russian and her invaluable experience in Moscow inevitably led to offers of jobs and consultancies from American businessmen eager to get entrenched in Russia. "I tell them I wouldn't recommend that anyone go over there without thinking very seriously about the crime," Salz said in a recent telephone interview from Los Angeles. "People here are really shocked when I tell them how bad it is. I learned how naive Americans are—even now—and how hopeful American businessmen are about going over there." She added that after hearing the news of Dasaro's death, "it occurred to me, of course, that the American government doesn't want the public to know what's going on. At some point there was a lid put on everything. None of my State Department friends can talk about it."

For Kim Gamel, leaving Moscow involved more than just fear of becoming a victim. "There *was* a sense of fear," she said recently in an interview in her campus apartment, in Evanston, Illinois. "That's why I'm here. But there also was a sense that if I stayed there, I'd lose my moral sense. Corruption is the system there, and I was not even blinking when I bribed someone." As a reporter in Moscow, she added, "I accepted the police system—it's very bad—as natural. I wasn't seeing the corruption as a good story. It was just a way of life."

Gamel said she was especially distressed by the U.S. embassy's stated reliance on the Moscow police to investigate the Dasaro murder fully. "The police are not even going to look for the truth, and everybody in the embassy knows it," Gamel said. Many embassy officials, she added, carry bottles of vodka in their automobiles for bribing the police in case of trouble.

Another American, who left Moscow in 1991, recalls the shock inside the embassy when it was discovered that organized crime was in charge of the always lengthy line for U.S. visas, as Russians by the thousands sought to take advantage of the state's liberalized international-travel rules. One senior American consular officer, enraged upon learning that those at the front of the line had paid criminals to get there, raced into the street and shoved the mobsters away. He was warned the next day by the Moscow police that neither the police nor any American inside the embassy had control over the streets outside. Russians continued to pay to stand in the visa line.

"Michael was killed because he was an American," says Catherine McSherry, who worked with Dasaro in the embassy for four years. "I always thought that if you had street smarts"—like Dasaro—"you'd be okay. But it doesn't mat-

ter in the end how assimilated you are; you stand out. Living alone as a woman is something you didn't want to do. I wouldn't walk my dog at night. I got rid of my car and hired a car and driver. Even with a driver you didn't feel safe. It's getting more and more gray in Moscow as to who's in government and who's in the mafia. It's more and more entwined. It's chaos out there."

McSherry, who is now a travel agent in Washington, adds, "I think we should be asking more questions. But we're afraid to."

NUCLEAR DEVICES—AND CONTROL

CODES—FOR SALE

A MYRIAD of official statistics and publications describe the extent of criminal penetration of Russia. But among them there is special significance to one recent and until now unpublicized U.S. study: an analysis of "the Russian mafia" compiled last November by the Department of Energy's Office of Threat Assessment. The office provides the U.S. intelligence community with specific analyses of the engineering equipment and high-tech data available to those nations around the world suspected of building—or wanting to build—nuclear-weapons arsenals. It has also begun a study of Russian control over nuclear warheads and fissionable materials—clear evidence that at least some in Washington are worried that organized crime is threatening Russian nuclear security.

The DOE's mafia study, officials at the department say, was the first step in what has become a large effort to collect intelligence on the potential nuclear threat from organized crime in Russia and the former Soviet republics. "Discussion of nuclear proliferation today," the report said, "must cover the risk of criminal proliferation." The report cited evidence showing that in 1991 about 4,000 organized-crime groups or gangs were operating inside Russia. The study included other findings:

- One quarter of the organized-crime groups are believed to have ties to similar criminal groups abroad or in the former Soviet republics. A significant number of the groups have merged some or all activities with corrupt government and police officials.
- Forty percent of private businesses and 60 percent of state-owned companies have been corrupted by organized crime.
- The Russian mafia may own half the nation's commercial banks and 50 to 80 percent of the shops, hotels, warehouses, depots, and service industries in Moscow. A substantial portion of the commercial district in St. Petersburg is similarly in the control of criminal elements, with businessmen being forced to pay 15 percent of their income for protection.
- Corruption in the Russian army is widespread. In February of last year Russian defense officials announced that they planned to discipline 3,000 officers for questionable business practices and that forty-six general officers faced court-martial



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proceedings on corruption charges. The illicit "movement of military materiel through organized crime channels has resulted in the spread of former Soviet guns and weapons throughout the FSU [former Soviet Union] arming militants, nationalists, and criminals—and the world at large." Russian armories are physically deteriorating and are guarded by soldiers whose indifference makes them vulnerable to criminal elements.

- Organized crime now uses high-tech communications equipment, including fax machines, shortwave radios, and cellular phones, far more sophisticated than anything used by Russian law-enforcement officials.

So far there has been no documented case of the successful theft or illicit sale of a nuclear warhead or enriched materials from a Russian or former-republic stockpile. Despite many press reports of illicit sales and attempted smuggling of nuclear materials, some of the men now responsible for the Clinton Administration's policies have insisted in recent interviews with me that since there is no clear-cut evidence, there is no crisis. "Worry isn't a policy," says a senior State Department official. "It's a judgment call. Anybody who says we are not engaged in a risk is crazy. As a statesman, all you can do is try to make it come out right." Another official, who feels the burden of the economic chaos in Russia, told me resignedly, "Unless you are able to come up with a credible story that a warhead has made it out of Russia, it's not particularly important."

. . .

Nonetheless there is powerful evidence that organized crime in the former Soviet Union has been systematically seeking access to the nuclear stockpiles, with their potential for huge profit. There is also evidence that the Russian government is unable to account for all its bombs and all its weapons-grade uranium and plutonium. The nuclear

in a recent interview that Washington has been preoccupied with negotiating a reduction in the former Soviet Union's strategic forces—the huge intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of hitting targets in the United States. The destruction of most of the launchers for those missiles, which are placed in Russia and three former Soviet republics—Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan—will be verified under current U.S.–Russian strategic-disarmament agreements, which have yet to go into force. But, Cochran said, there is no U.S.–Russian mechanism in place for independently verifying the destruction of the warheads for the strategic delivery systems.

In mid-1992 the Central Intelligence Agency, telling Congress that it had only a "highly uncertain estimate" of the size of the Russian tactical nuclear arsenal, estimated Russia's warhead count at 30,000 for both strategic and tactical weapons, with a margin of error of 5,000 warheads. "We don't know how many warheads they've destroyed," Cochran told me. "In fact, we don't know within thousands how many warheads they had. And we don't know within hundreds how many they're destroying in any given year. We also don't know how much fissile material"—weapons-grade uranium or plutonium—"the Russians have within hundreds of tons." In mid-1992 the Bush Administration agreed to buy 500 tons of highly enriched uranium from the Russian stockpile "without knowing whether they have seven hundred or twelve hundred tons," Cochran said. The major piece of legislation that Congress has passed on the Russian nuclear issue is aimed at ensuring the safe transport, storage, and destruction of nuclear weapons. The law, signed into effect by President Bush in 1991, provides funds for secure containers and improved safety conditions on the Russian railway cars that ferry the weapons. "The legislation is a joke," Cochran said,

referring to its implementation. "For example, it gives them training on how to respond to a nuclear accident but provides nothing for cleanup afterwards. They've already had two horrible nuclear accidents"—one in 1957, at a plutonium-production plant in the Urals, and the other at Chernobyl, in 1986—"and instead of

helping clean them up, we're giving them training on how to handle the next one."

Cochran said that his frustration over the current lack of nuclear intelligence is heightened by the fact that he and his colleagues in the NRDC were rebuffed by the Bush Administration in 1991 when they proposed a joint program to find, identify, and tag all nuclear weapons in Russian and American stockpiles. The White House rejected the idea because Russian military leaders, in offering full access to their tacti-

THERE is powerful evidence that organized crime in the former Soviet Union has been systematically seeking access to the nuclear stockpiles, with their potential for huge profit.

weapons most at risk are Russia's tactical nuclear warheads, many of which are believed to carry an explosive force far greater than that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. These warheads, designed for use in artillery shells, aircraft bombs, land mines, and torpedoes, are stored under less-than-secure conditions on many military bases.

Dr. Thomas B. Cochran, a senior scientist at the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and one of the leading U.S. experts on Soviet nuclear issues, explained

cal and strategic nuclear storage areas, were insisting on reciprocity inside the United States. "My belief is that many people in the Defense Department and White House thought, 'We won the Cold War and we don't want any Russian oversight over our arsenal,'" Cochran said. "As a consequence, we don't have any oversight over their arsenal."

The NRDC's proposed joint operation had the added advantage, Cochran pointed out, of giving out-of-work and out-of-money Russian nuclear scientists and technicians something to do in lieu of selling their expertise to the highest foreign bidder. Clinton's election did not solve the problem, Cochran added angrily: the U.S. government still has not advanced a coherent program for verifying the elimination of Russian nuclear warheads and tracking the ultimate disposition of tons of surplus weapons-grade materials. "And now, three years after the Russians agreed to do joint research on the destruction of nuclear warheads," Cochran told me, "we have nothing. I think control of warheads and fissile material in Russia should be the number-one national-security issue for America."

In subsequent interviews many well-informed national-security officials said privately that they agreed with Cochran but questioned the value of raising the issue in public. A top administrator of one agency involved with nuclear matters told me that there is "a lot of legitimate and deep concern" inside the Clinton Administration about organized crime in Russia and the vulnerability of the Soviet tactical nuclear arsenal. "Could a Russian weapons storage area be raided?" the official asked rhetorically. "Yes. By Western standards they are minimally defended."

At this point the official, who has discussed many other sensitive issues with me in the past, suggested that I not publish my information on the link between organized crime and Russian nuclear-weapons security. "I'm a very strong supporter of freedom of the press," the official said. "But even an investigative reporter would support the notion that you don't yell 'Fire' in a theater."

"Let me put it this way," another well-informed national-security analyst told me. "We're gambling that Yeltsin can somehow keep control of the most important things most of the time. It's a gamble imposed on us not by our own policy

but by a course of events beyond our control. Yes, our public posture is Pollyannaish, but there is some value in not panicking the whole world. The question is whether we're in the process of fooling ourselves—whether we're screwing things up. After all, a government that can't figure out how to deal with safety on the streets in Washington should not try to deal in Russia. On the other hand, by turning a blind eye to this I hope we're not encouraging someone to think he's sitting on a pot of gold." This official said that he, too, could see an argument for not writing

about the nuclear-theft risk posed by organized crime: "The very last thing we should do is provide free advertising to people who are thinking about it."

Despite his doubts, the official went on to summarize some immediate security problems. The essential concern is that the new Russian government, weakened as it is, no longer controls its territory and its people. "It's not even close to what the old Soviet Union had," the official said. Because of rigid internal controls, the Soviet nuclear establishment had no need for extensive physical barriers at the weapons-storage sites. "Back in

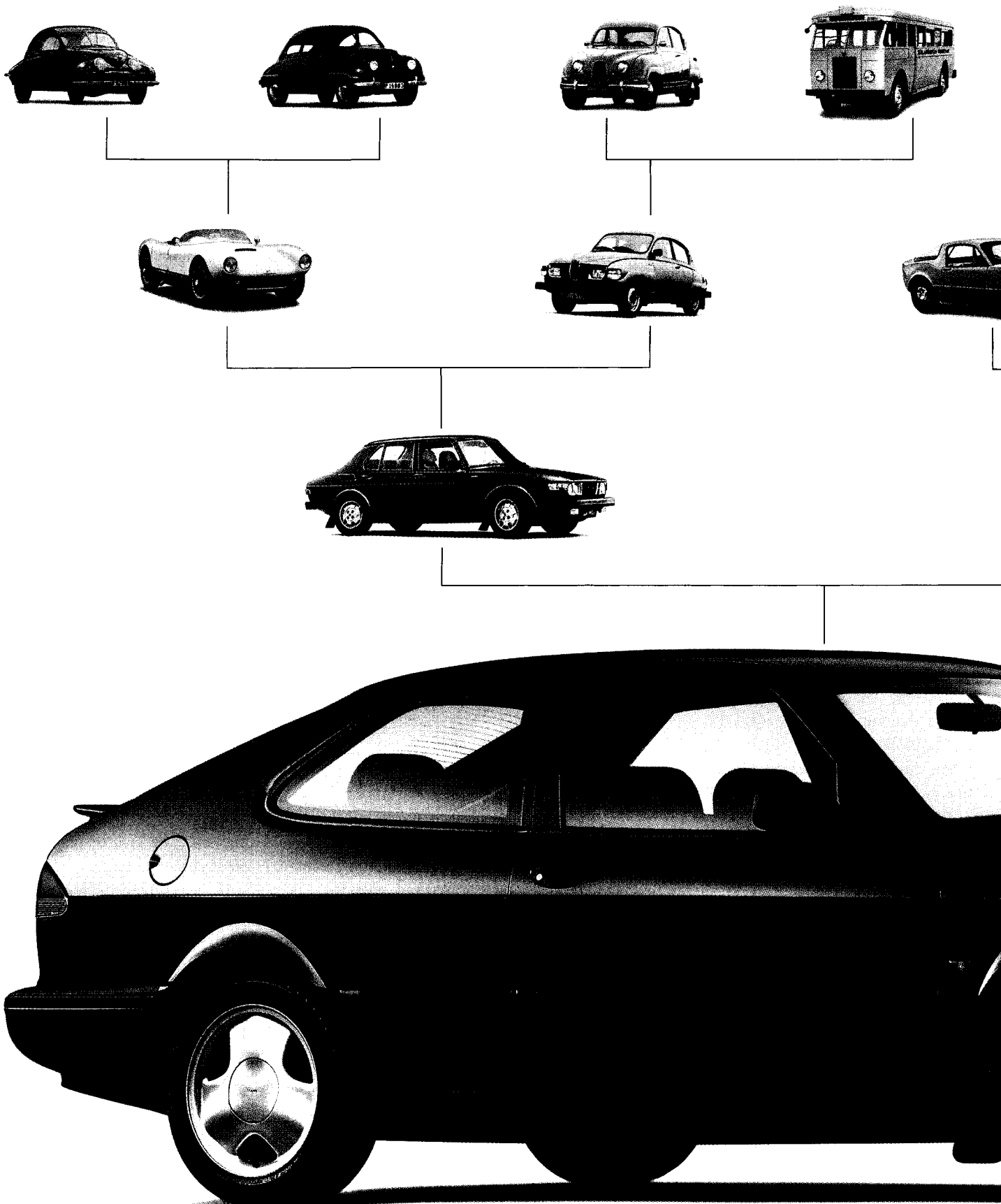
the old days," the official explained, "the lack of physical safeguards didn't matter. Even if someone had shot off a lock [and seized military goods], the government would send the KGB after them. The basic assumption was that physical security was backed up by overall control.

"If you go to a typical U.S. installation with sensitive stuff, it's hard to get on and off the base—lots of guards—but you don't have locks on every door. The assumption is that no one is going to get on the base. In the old Soviet Union the really tough perimeter fence was the one around the border. What mattered was that the KGB had two divisions, with helicopters and all that. And now that's gone away and the Russians don't have the resources to retrofit the installations with the kind of protection you'd want. None of this is a secret to us, but I don't think there's any advantage in talking about it."

"Would they let us help them?" The official answered his rhetorical question with a noncommittal shrug. "If they asked for help, would we give it? Of course. The fact is that our options are limited."

Paul A. Goble, who resigned from the State Department



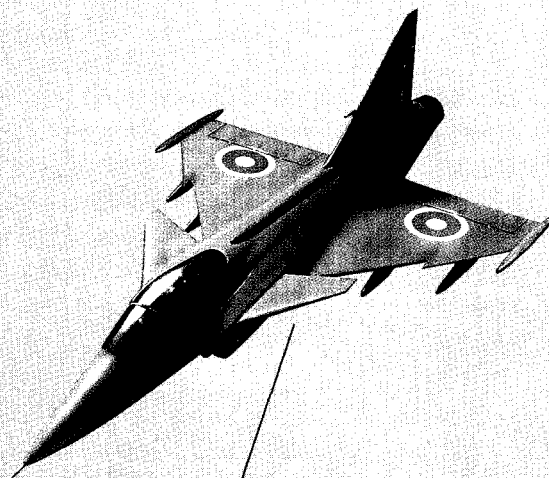
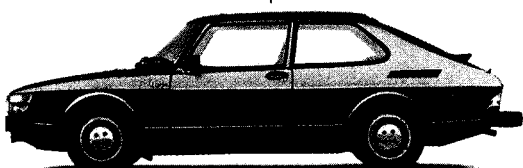


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in 1991 as the special adviser on Soviet nationality issues, explained to me that the notion of limited options is heightened by the American “assumption that in any given territory the strongest force is the government.” He said, “It’s reassuring for our leaders to think other leaders have more power than they actually do.” In Russia, he added, “we’re watching the death of a state.” Goble, now a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was willing to say what no one in the Clinton Administration wants said: “I’m convinced that if I had twenty-five million dollars, I could buy a warhead and the launch codes.”

A RISKY STUNT

AS many national-security officials in the government know, such a purchase almost happened—and for much less than \$25 million. In 1991 William M. Arkin, then a nuclear-weapons expert for Greenpeace, the international environmental-action group, spent eight months negotiating the sale of a nuclear SCUD warhead with one of the men assigned to its protection. His goal was to expose the vulnerability of the Russian nuclear arsenal. The incident was first reported in *Critical Mass*, a study of nuclear proliferation published last February. Its authors, William E. Burrows, the director of New York University’s Science and Environmental Reporting Program, and Robert Windrem, an NBC television producer, describe Arkin’s negotiations with a twenty-eight-year-old senior lieutenant in the special troops of the Soviet general staff. East and West Germany had been unified the previous year, and the officer was assigned to guard nuclear warheads at an overcrowded and undermanned bunker at Alten-Grabow, a Russian base an hour’s drive south of Berlin.

Arkin arranged a clandestine meeting with the officer at

which a price—roughly \$250,000—was agreed upon. Arkin, who told the lieutenant that he represented Greenpeace, visited the base and determined that the theft of a 1,500-pound nuclear warhead was feasible: twelve officers who guarded the perimeter at night were the base’s only protection, and Arkin’s lieutenant was the man in charge of the shift. The lieutenant told Arkin, according to *Critical Mass*, that he had determined a time when he could get access to the warhead and to the necessary keys and codes for the alarm systems. The plan called for the lieutenant and two enlisted men to drive a truck up to the bunker, load the warhead on the truck, and drive off. “I know it sounds fantastic on a certain level,” the book quotes Arkin as explaining, “but in fact the level of security . . . was very heavily weighted toward defending against a NATO attack. It was not heavily weighted toward protesters, or public intervention, or terrorists.”

Elaborate plans were made to smuggle the lieutenant out of Germany, with the warhead to be put on public display in Berlin by Greenpeace. The plan fell apart around the time of the abortive Moscow coup in August of 1991, when all Soviet weapons were abruptly moved out of Germany. The lieutenant apparently went back to Russia with them.

Arkin’s near-miss attracted little public attention after the publication of *Critical Mass*, although some of the national-security officials interviewed for this article said that they knew of his negotiations. Before moving to Washington, in the late 1970s, and becoming active in arms control, Arkin recently explained, he spent more than three years as a special assistant to the deputy chief of staff for intelligence of the U.S. Army commander in West Berlin. At the time, West Berlin was a center of espionage and intelligence operations targeted against Soviet forces in East Germany and East Berlin. Arkin wrote intelligence estimates and reports on counterintelligence missions, he told me; he was also direct-

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with those swamp-stumping galoshes
below that grizzly coat and your own whiskers
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been in them already this morning
mussing and growling and kissing—
next time you pole the raft of you downriver
down River Street past my place

you could say *hello*, you canoe-footed fur-faced
musk ox, pockets full of cheese and acorns
and live fish and four-headed winds and sky, *hello*
is what human beings say when they meet each other
—if you can’t say hello like a human don’t
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bring that she-bear, and if you do I’ll know
even if I’m not on the steps putting my shadow
down like a welcome mat, I’ll know.

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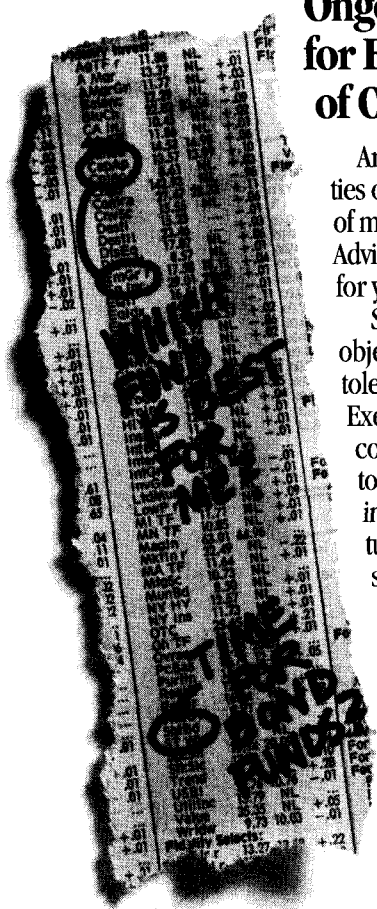
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ly involved in espionage activities. Through contacts he had made while serving in Army intelligence in West Berlin, he learned in early 1990 of turmoil at the nuclear-storage facilities at Alton-Grabow. He was also told, Arkin said, that U.S. intelligence had reliable reports indicating that highly classified materials were for sale in East Germany. It was at that point that he reached out and began a series of inquiries that led him to the Russian lieutenant.

"I conceived the operation," Arkin told me. "If there are problems with security for these warheads, then here's an opportunity for us to nose around where we can't get hurt." Operating in unified Germany was much safer than operating during the Cold War, he said: "We're on German soil and the worst that will happen is that they'll throw us out of the country." That the operation did not work is beside the point, according to Arkin. "I know it was real," he said.

In early 1993 Kirill Belyaninov, a young investigative reporter for *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Moscow's most respected weekly newsmagazine, went underground with two colleagues inside Russia in an effort to learn whether a nuclear black market did exist. Months of dealing with middlemen paid off, as Belyaninov wrote in the magazine, when he and his colleagues were shown what was said to be the warhead from a Soviet SS-20 nuclear missile. The asking price was \$70,000. "I was told it came from the Ukraine," Belyaninov told me in a recent telephone interview from his office in Moscow, "and that there were more warheads ready for delivery."

The reporter sent a photograph he had taken of the warhead to scientists at Arzamas-16, Russia's main nuclear-weapons laboratory, southeast of Moscow; they confirmed that the warhead outwardly appeared to be real. No attempt was made to buy the warhead, Belyaninov said (the magazine did not have that kind of money), but a full account was published last summer, as part of a series looking into what the reporting team described as an extensive and flourishing nuclear black market. A few days after publication, Belyaninov said, he had a meeting with the official who ran the security department at the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy. Had he read the article? "It was enjoyable," the official responded, according to Belyaninov. "I read it as a science-fiction story."

UNCHECKED PROLIFERATION

THE *Literaturnaya Gazeta* account is difficult to corroborate, but the American intelligence community cannot dismiss it as science fiction. The American intelligence community was stunned to learn in the aftermath of the signing of the 1987 U.S.-USSR Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty that it had dramatically overestimated the size of the Soviet SS-20 mobile missile fleet—and even more dra-



matically underestimated the number of Soviet SS-23 launchers and missiles. The Gorbachev government provided data showing that there were 659 SS-20s deployed or in storage at the time of the INF agreement; the U.S. Defense Department was then reporting that the Soviets had 900 SS-20 missiles in all. At the same time, however, American intelligence had been able to locate by overhead reconnaissance only ten Soviet SS-23 missiles on site in the western Soviet Union; the Gorbachev data revealed that in fact there were 167 missiles deployed. Stunned officials of the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency acknowledged, according to a *Washington Post* account, that they were reviewing their past estimates.

Unease over the gaps in American knowledge and the threat of organized crime in Russia has spread to America's most sophisticated nonproliferation intelligence unit—the Department of Energy's Z Division, at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, in Livermore, California. Analysts there, who handle the most highly classified nuclear-proliferation data available to the government, are now involved in an intensive review of the potential nuclear threat from Russian organized crime. They are also reviewing a second category

of nuclear threat: the nightmarish possibility that some of the Russian-controlled nuclear weapons in Ukraine may have been eased out of the official stockpile by forces loyal to the new government in Kiev. Most suspicions, according to American sources, center on a group of Russian-army nuclear custodial officers assigned to the strategic-bomber bases at Uzin and Priluki, in Ukraine, which were to have returned all their tactical nuclear bombs to Russia last year. Some nuclear custodial officers at the air bases have taken

However, the DOE study also criticized the press for its “sensationalist” reporting on alleged nuclear smuggling and noted that there was “no evidence” that any nuclear weapons or weapons-grade materials have been illegally exported from the former Soviet Union. That conclusion, sources with firsthand information have told me, is now being reviewed by the analysts at Z Division and by intelligence experts elsewhere in the Clinton Administration.

I was told that during the planning meetings and confer-

ences before the summit in Moscow last January, Russian intelligence officials provided their American counterparts with information about three attempted diversions of weapons-grade material. In the most significant case sixty kilograms of highly enriched uranium—enough to make three weapons of Hiroshima size—was seized last April by the Russian Ministry of Security in Izhevsk, 600 miles east of Moscow. Two months later officials arrested twenty people, including two Italians, in Brest, near the Belarus-Polish border, and charged them with attempting to smuggle thirty-six kilograms of enriched uranium.



oaths of loyalty to Ukraine, and these officers may have played a role in diverting some of the bombs—with yields of 100 kilotons or more—from Russian to Ukrainian control.

There is obvious concern inside Z Division that not every official in Washington may want to hear about such threats. While researching this article, I was indirectly but emphatically encouraged to keep on reporting by a group of Z Division researchers.

The Department of Energy’s concern was spelled out last year in its study of the Russian mafia, which noted that organized-crime investigators have established “the existence of a latent, potential nuclear smuggling infrastructure” in Russia and the former Soviet republics. The study cited an Eastern European expert on terrorism as concluding that Russian and Italian mafia leaders have agreed that their global crime syndicate not only will handle narcotics but also will devise “plans to smuggle nuclear weapons-grade material out of Russia along routes used in drug trade.” The report warned, “Given a high enough profit motive, the Russian mafia may conclude in the future that the health and law enforcement risks are worth running.”

In early February, *Der Spiegel*, the German news magazine, reported that Germany’s federal intelligence agency, the BND, has concluded that there have been more than 200 illicit sales of nuclear material from the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact nations, much of it smuggled through Germany. *Der Spiegel* further reported that the BND had prepared an eighteen-page report for Chancellor Helmut Kohl stating that it could no longer rule out the possibility that Western gangsters could obtain sophisticated nuclear devices and use them for extortion.

Of equally great concern are intelligence reports, yet to be confirmed, that weapons-grade plutonium was smuggled from a storage depot in Russia to North Korea. In March of last year Germany’s *Stern* magazine cited a KGB report claiming that North Korea had produced its first nuclear warhead by early 1990. The magazine also said that the North Koreans had obtained fifty-six kilograms of plutonium from the former Soviet Union. A similar report was circulated last winter inside the U.S. intelligence community, I was told by one source, who did not know whether that report was linked to the earlier published accounts.

North Korea, now reported by U.S. intelligence agencies to have enough plutonium for at least one nuclear warhead, was accused last year in the Russian press of attempting to recruit a group of sixty-four Russian missile experts. The men, stopped at the Moscow airport while attempting to board a plane for Pyongyang, had reportedly been offered jobs there for \$3,000 a month. At the time, their monthly pay in Russia was less than \$20.

Russian nuclear security and the "brain drain" problem

from Moscow you get to Romania. Will you get a job offer from some other country?"

The Los Alamos joint-research effort, admirable though it may be, is too late. Last October the *Chicago Tribune* quoted CIA officials as saying that China, Iran, and Iraq had followed North Korea's lead by actively and successfully recruiting Russian nuclear scientists and engineers. The CIA has concluded, the newspaper said, that "Russia's efforts to control the exodus of scientists largely have collapsed."

The scientists are doing more than merely leaving the country. They are taking sensitive high-tech weapons components with them and selling them to the highest bidder. Knowledge of such goings-on is widespread and has been widely reported. A former National Security Council aide, who worked in the

AT one Russian nuclear site enriched uranium was stored in a Quonset hut that was "protected by a padlock," one congressional source said. "No sensors. No electronics."

are now being studied by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, which last year was mandated to investigate proliferation problems in the former Soviet Union. The initial findings have been alarming. "You cannot assume that a central government in one of the republics has any control over what's going on in its territories," a congressional source told me in a recent interview. At one Russian nuclear site enriched uranium was stored in a Quonset hut that was "protected by a padlock or a cipher lock," he said. "No sensors. No electronics. Just two sets of barbed wire." The uranium was being protected by Russian militiamen armed with hunting knives. Nuclear scientists at Arzamas-16, the nuclear-weapons laboratory, have been in a state of near rebellion over the lack of such basic amenities as housing, health care, and regular paychecks, the source said. At one point last summer the scientists—equivalent in competence and knowledge to the American bomb builders at Los Alamos, New Mexico—staged a public demonstration in order to get paid.

"These guys would go to Somalia for health care," says Stephen M. Younger, a Los Alamos nuclear physicist who has been active in arranging joint research projects with the weapons experts at Arzamas-16. "This is the time to be their friends," Younger told me recently. "We're going to hold their hands. These people have a lot of information in their heads."

The joint research also provides a means of funneling cash to the Russians. Thus far, Younger said, none of the Arzamas-16 scientists has left the country. But many other topflight scientists, made desperate by a lack of money, have. "The Russians are worried about what they call diffusion," Younger said. "Some of these guys will diffuse away from the authorities. Suppose you get a job in Moscow, and

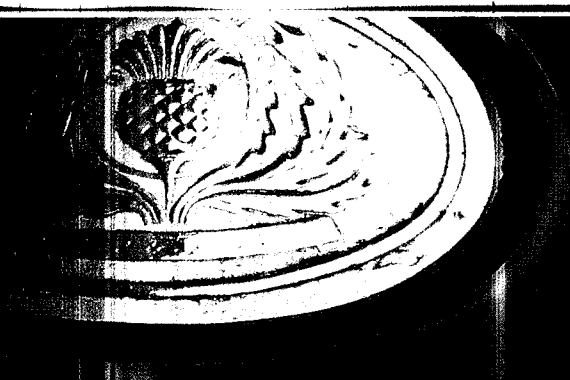
Bush Administration, tells of learning that Russian scientists had recently offered to sell firing devices for nuclear weapons to an American businessman. A former senior State Department official provides a graphic description of a visit to a former Soviet republic: "My image is Harpo Marx. You go to discuss foreign affairs with the Foreign Minister. As you get up to leave, he opens his coat. He's got a bottle of aspirin and a \$3.95 watch for sale."

SMUSHING ALARMISTS

QUESTIONS about the extent of organized crime in Russia are being raised these days in public, but not by senior officials of the Clinton Administration. "I think in many areas of the former Soviet Union—not in Russia yet—the state is so weak that organized crime is capable of control," says Paul Goble, who served as a CIA analyst before joining the State Department. "We're going to see the rebirth of a Russian state that will be highly authoritarian, and will use organized crime as an excuse."

A number of Clinton Administration experts on Russia, after being assured that they would not be quoted by name, told me that they agree with Goble. These officials say that organized crime and inflation in Russia have moved that nation to the edge of becoming, as one puts it, another Weimar Republic—the short-lived democratic German government whose attempts at political and economic liberalism after the First World War collapsed when the public preferred the totalitarian National Socialists. Russia's strong central government and its internal police force, the KGB, have simply disappeared, and no other state institution has replaced them.

"Russian policymakers committed a fundamental mis-



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take,” the Canadian journalist Stephen Handelman wrote in the March-April issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

They tried to develop a free market before constructing a civil society in which such a market could safely operate. As a result, businessmen, politicians and law enforcement agencies suffer. . . . Many activities that are required for a market economy to function remain illegal or unprotected by legislation; other activities that are considered unlawful according to Western norms, such as organized crime, are not specifically prohibited.

“Organized crime,” one fully informed Treasury Department economist told me recently, “is now much more powerful than the state and gaining power. It’s not even close. An economist would argue that the mafia exists where there are inefficiencies. You cannot fight it just with law enforcement, but you’ve got to change the inefficiencies” of the economic system. This was one of the goals, he said, of the Bush and Clinton Administrations in their endorsement of economic “shock therapy”—the attempt to force the state-controlled economies of Russia and the former republics into free-market systems. The economist referred sadly to the “collapse” of the Administration’s Russia policy—a collapse caused in part by the strong showing in the December elections of the ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and other anti-Yeltsin candidates, many of whom campaigned heavily on law-and-order issues.

Another significant factor was the resignation, within days of the January Clinton-Yeltsin summit, of two key Russian economic reformers, First Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov. The resignations were accompanied by public rebukes of the Russian-American economic policy and were widely perceived as an embarrassment to the President and Strobe Talbott, his chief policymaker for Russia, who is now the deputy secretary of state. But in fact, the Treasury Department economist acknowledged, Bill Clinton and his top aides had flown to Moscow knowing of Gaidar’s threat to resign and of the growing chaos inside Yeltsin’s government; they had worked out an agreement to delay announcing the resignation until the summit was completed. In the

interim all diplomatic and intelligence reporting on the pending collapse in Moscow was restricted to a highly classified back channel, the economist said, to prevent any damaging leaks. The Administration was driven in all this, he added, by domestic politics: nothing would be permitted to interfere with the summit and its heavy network-television coverage, which included special access for ABC’s *Nightline*. “The whole concern is spin,” the economist said with a shrug.

In retrospect, the Treasury official said, one of the most significant mistakes made by the American shock-therapy proponents was their failure to anticipate fully the viciousness and rapaciousness of the criminal element. “We had a belief that the first generation of Russian capitalists would be nice guys, but they are ruthless motherfuckers,” the official said. “Much worse than the American robber barons. These guys take the fillings out of teeth after murder. It’s a nightmare. Production has ceased. The only institution that’s growing is the mafia.”

“The Wild West, Alaska frontier, and Chicago in the twenties” is the way a senior State Department official involved in day-to-day Soviet economic strategy describes Russia today. “Anyone who says there isn’t a crisis of governance would be crazy.” A former national-security official, who worked in the Reagan and Bush Administrations, says, “The chaos scares me. Here we have a 1930s situation in Chicago, except that Al Capone has access to nuclear weapons.”

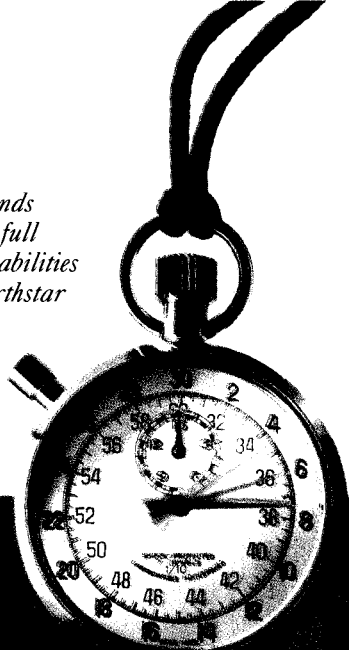


THESE officials, however, refuse to make such statements on the record. They and other government bureaucrats have come to believe that talking openly about the impact of organized crime will damage their careers.

That view is especially widespread inside the Agency for International Development, which has been under heavy attack from congressional budget and appropriations committees for its alleged mismanagement of more than \$1.4 billion appropriated for the years 1992 to 1994 to promote capitalism and the conversion of state-owned businesses and factories into privately held property in Russia and the former republics.

At one briefing last July a CIA official provided a scathing

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report on the Russian mafia's infiltration of the privatization program. "Privatization is the centerpiece of AID funding, and it was the first time I heard the CIA admitting there was a problem," a government official who attended the briefing told me last fall, although, as he knew, Russian newspapers had been full of detailed accounts of wrongdoing.

The briefing focused in part on the voucher program that had been created in Russia and the former republics to ensure that all citizens would be given an opportunity to share in the new private economic system. Millions of privatization vouchers—with a redeemable cash value—were printed and distributed. State-owned property would be publicly auctioned, and the citizens, using their vouchers, would be able to bid. The vouchers could also be used to buy stock in what had been state property.

The CIA official bore a grim message. Millions more vouchers were turning up than had been printed. And millions of vouchers were not being canceled after their use, as regulations called for, but were being reused to buy more property. The mafia, which was behind the counterfeiting of vouchers and their fraudulent reuse, was directly threatening citizens in an effort to keep them from bidding at privatization auctions. Organized-crime groups would appear at the auctions with suitcases full of vouchers and buy up the property at very low prices. The briefing ended with expressions of bureaucratic concern for the future of the privatization program.

An employee at an involved government agency recently told me that his very rough guess last year was that 30 to 50 percent of AID money for privatization is spent in a way that ultimately benefits criminal interests. But when he raised his concern with officials at decision-making levels, he told me, "the reaction was 'There's always corruption in AID programs, and we don't want to get into it.'" The employee recounted one meeting at which "everyone jumped on me for being 'irrelevant' in raising organized crime." He would have left his government job, he said, but could not afford to do so.

Many government experts on Russian affairs, frustrated by their inability to deal publicly with the organized-crime issue, referred me, with approval, to scholarly data on crime in Russia which have been compiled by Professor Louise I. Shelley, a sociologist and criminologist at the School of Public Affairs at American University, in Washington, D.C.

In a paper delivered at an academic meeting last fall, Shelley presented a devastating portrait of present and future life in the former Soviet Union.

Organized crime has penetrated most of the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union at all governmental levels and with such pervasiveness and with such infiltration into the society that it ceases to be a crime problem but a phenomenon that will help determine the future course of development of the Soviet successor states. . . .

Domination by the Communist Party may be replaced by the controls of organized crime. As in other societies, organized crime will limit free elections and freedom of the press and media. Labor markets once controlled by state planning and submissive trade unions will instead be subject to the intimidation of organized crime, which is already a major employer. State ownership of the economy will be exchanged for control of the economy by organized crime groups which have a monopoly on existing capital.

The collapse of communism may not lead to democratization and the transition to a competitive capitalist economy. Instead, the pervasiveness of organized crime may lead to an alternative form of development—political clientism and controlled markets. The control will come from the alliance of former Communist Party officials with the emergent organized crime groups, groups that currently enjoy the preponderance of capital of the post-Soviet states.

Later in her presentation Shelley noted that much of the commerce of organized crime is in the smuggling of military equipment, minerals, and nuclear materials. "The trade of organized crime is so diverse," Shelley said, "that it includes almost anything of former state property which can be sold for a profit."

THE MISSING LINK:

U.S. LOYALTY TO BORIS YELTSIN

THOSE officials who worry about the risk of nuclear proliferation also acknowledge that demanding that Boris Yeltsin begin a nationwide crackdown on Russian crime—a necessary first step in curtailing the Russian nuclear black market—would be a devastating blow to social reform. "The problem of Russia," one involved official told me recently, "is that a lot of their facilities were designed with the awareness that they were a police state. And they are not one any longer. I hate to see an embassy guy get killed in Moscow and nobody do anything about it, just as I'd hate to see somebody in Washington get killed. But the question is, Do people in our embassy have any right to be more protected [than others living in Moscow]? To say yes is to say that the KGB should be following them around, which we don't want. If Yeltsin decided that there has to be a crackdown and they go back to being a police state, there would be a lot of support in Russia. But I'd hate to think that we'd support it."

Another official, also deeply involved in nuclear matters, acknowledges that there is currently "confusion between what we should do and what we can do" about the lack of nuclear security in Russia. "The American people sometimes make the erroneous assumption that we can somehow cure the world's problems," he says. "And if we don't solve them, therefore, we have failed."

The quandary over how best to proceed with strengthen-

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ing nuclear security in Russia is further complicated by strong anti-American feelings now sweeping Russia, triggered not only by Yeltsin's bloody showdown last fall with his opposition in the Parliament but also by the widespread belief that the Soviet leader can do little wrong in Washington's eyes.

The many critics of the Clinton Administration's policy toward Russia—who cut across the ideological spectrum—have focused on its seemingly unstinting support for Boris Yeltsin and the initial reluctance of Washington to establish ties with any other potential leaders in Russia.

Blair Ruble, a scholar who is the director of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, in Washington, D.C., accuses the Administration of “not dealing with reality” in its reaction to the disastrous December elections, in which Yeltsin and his supporters won about 25 percent of the popular vote. “The problem is that we are thinking in terms of the Cold War,” Ruble told me recently. “We want to deal with one leader because that’s what we want to do. We don’t want to deal with regional leaders. The solution is to build up social structures, get out of Moscow—which is poisonous—and make contact with others. The fallacy of resting everything on Yeltsin is that he has lost stature as a leader. And to stay in power, he’ll have to depend on the military or the mafia—or create a sideshow.”

The sideshow Ruble means is expansion of the Russian republic. Paul Goble predicts that Yeltsin will respond to his poor showing in the December parliamentary elections and the success of the ultranationalists by re-establishing control over portions of the former Soviet Union—either by administrative fiat or with armed force. Such a move would dramatically increase his popularity among the disillusioned Russian people. “The scary thing,” Goble warns, “is that this Administration has not realized that Russia is a threat to its neighbors. When things are bad at home, they go abroad.”

The issue arose during an appearance by Strobe Talbott before the Senate Foreign Operations subcommittee last January. There was tough questioning from Senator Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, who said, “Last year you, the Clinton Administration, opposed my amendment to link aid to a respect for territorial integrity. . . . You also op-

posed my desire to earmark funds for Ukraine, which was clearly designated to indicate the United States accepted Ukraine as an independent entity. I’m having a hard time finding examples of when this Administration has opposed Russian foreign policy on anything. . . . It’s as if this Administration really supports any Russian effort to assert itself beyond the borders in what used to be the Soviet Union.”

Another witness, Stephen F. Cohen, of Princeton University, reminded the senators that he had been among a small

group of USSR scholars who had warned repeatedly—and presciently—about U.S. policy toward Russia. Now he was worried again. “It is said that the United States must support Yeltsin because he is Russia’s elected President,” Cohen said. “This is correct. But the Clinton Administration has gone far beyond that accepted norm of international conduct. It has acted as Yeltsin’s political cheerleader, accomplice, spin doctor.”

In late February, Senate Republicans backed up their criticisms of the Administration’s Russia policy by casting thirty-one votes—twice as many as expected—against the con-

firmation of Talbott, a longtime Clinton friend, as deputy secretary of state. The nomination was confirmed, but the Senate’s message seemed to get through by early spring, when the President received official delegations from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Georgia—signaling that the United States viewed those areas no longer as former Soviet republics but as fully independent and self-contained nations. The Administration also widened its diplomatic contacts with newly elected members of the Russian parliament, many of whom were harshly critical of Yeltsin.

IN their criticisms Senator McConnell, Professor Cohen, and the others touched on a sensitive policy question that, as they perhaps did not know, is being debated today inside the Administration: How far, if at all, can the United States intervene in the internal affairs of Russia—if only to help protect the Russian nuclear arsenal?

Questions about whether and how deeply to intervene in Russian affairs are not new. In early spring of 1991, well before the August coup attempt, the Bush Administration learned of the plotting against Mikhail Gorbachev and



turned to Yeltsin as a possible alternative leader. Over the next few months U.S. intelligence agencies were assigned to help Yeltsin, then the President of Russia, improve his personal and communications security. When the coup finally took place, President Bush ordered that essential communications intelligence be provided to Yeltsin—over the bitter protests of the National Security Agency, which is responsible for such top-secret intercepts. This help enabled Yeltsin to emerge from the crisis a triumphant hero. The transfer of intelligence was conducted under stringent secrecy and the House and Senate intelligence committees were not formally notified—as is required by law.

Gorbachev's *perestroika*, and the sudden rise in criminal activity, opened up the Soviet Union to the CIA and the NSA, and eliminated the need to send U.S. agents on what had for decades been very risky assignments. "The CIA asked, 'How can we get sources?'" one former senior intelligence official told me recently. "The answer is by paying them. What an incredible position to be in. You can pay men in authority, and you know by technical means who's in control, and by technical means you can monitor what they're doing. Why? Because they are immoral. It's no surprise. We've described Russians as criminal all during the Cold War, and since they are no longer Communists, are they suddenly now the moral equivalent of Republicans?" The former official added with a laugh, "As much as Republicans are moral."

Having what the intelligence community calls a "special relationship" with a senior Russian official was no longer a novelty by the spring of 1991, when NSA intercepts and other intelligence persuaded some top White House aides, among them Robert M. Gates, then the deputy national security adviser, that a hard-liners' coup was coming against a weakened Mikhail Gorbachev. The President, an admirer of Gorbachev, and his senior advisers eventually decided that contact should be made with the Soviet leader's main rival—Boris Yeltsin. George Bush thus was doing precisely what Bill Clinton's critics today accuse him of not doing—reaching out to potential new leaders. It should be noted that at the time, Yeltsin was viewed as being more strongly committed than any other Russian leader, including Gorbachev, to Western-style democracy and economic reform, and thus was a far more attractive alternative than the hard-line opposition leaders are today. Yeltsin made his second visit to Washington in June of 1991, and Gates asked a ranking senator to take him aside during a formal reception at the Soviet embassy and ask his view of U.S. intelligence about coup plot-

ting. "We went off in a corner, and I raised it with Yeltsin," the senator, who did not wish to be named, told me. "Are we being overwrought about the coup? He said, 'Absolutely not! There will be a coup before the end of the calendar year. Gorbachev doesn't believe it, but I'm preparing for it.'"

Yeltsin had improved his personal security and had also developed a rudimentary system for communications security. "We built on what he had been doing," the senator said.

Gorbachev continued to ignore a series of American warnings over the summer, including one personally relayed in a telephone call by President Bush. There was no question that the coup was being organized by, among others, two men who wanted to bring back the old days—Vladimir Kryuchkov, the chairman of the KGB, and Dmitri Yazov, the Minister of Defense. The coup began on Sunday afternoon, August 18, with the enforced isolation of Gorbachev at his summer dacha in the Crimea and the naming of a new Soviet leader. Within hours the NSA was monitoring Kryuchkov's and Yazov's communications from their offices to the various military command posts around the nation. The military men were staying put—in some cases refusing even to take the calls from Moscow. The coup was stalled.

Bush was briefed on the intelligence and gave authorization for the intercepts to be provided to Yeltsin, who early Monday had defiantly moved with his supporters to his office in the Russian parliament building, known as the White House. Tanks appeared that morning in front of city hall and the White House, but they had been given no orders. The tank crews simply sat and chatted with citizens who gathered throughout the day.

"The Minister of Defense and the KGB chief were using the most secure lines to reach the military commanders," one

THE U.S. intelligence community may no longer be in a position to have advance warning of momentous events inside Russia—as it had before the coup that brought Yeltsin to power.

official with firsthand knowledge told me recently. "We told Yeltsin in real time what the communications were. The bulk of the theater commanders weren't taking the calls."

"We monitor every major command, and we handed it to Yeltsin on a platter," the official said with obvious regret. "It demonstrated to the Soviet commanders that we can read it all—that we can penetrate it."

An American communications specialist on duty at the embassy in Moscow was ordered into the White House, with

communications gear, and assigned to help Yeltsin and his followers make their own secure telephone calls to the various military commanders. "Yeltsin was able to warn them to steer clear," the official said—to continue to refuse calls from the coup plotters in Moscow. Late on Monday morning a heroic Yeltsin, vowing defiance, dramatically climbed atop a Soviet tank in front of the White House; photographs depicting his fearlessness were published on front pages around the world.

Astonishingly, on August 14—four days before the coup began—President Bush had signed into law a much-debated congressional amendment to the 1947 National Security Act which made it illegal for him not to inform Congress about covert actions, such as the supplying of communications intelligence to Yeltsin. The new law, approved by Congress on July 31, explicitly defined "covert action" as an activity by the U.S. government "to influence political, economic, or military conditions abroad, where it is intended that the role of the United States Government will not be apparent or acknowledged publicly."

"Bush got no finding [a document submitted to Congress reporting the use of covert action] because it's a 'sources and methods' issue," a former CIA official explains, referring to language in the original National Security Act authorizing the director of the CIA to protect state secrets. "There are sources Congress has never been told about. Some Russians now know more about our capability than the U.S. Congress does." He adds that in his opinion, Bush and his senior advisers decided against seeking congressional approval out of fear that the elected officials would inevitably ask what would happen to U.S. influence and credibility inside the former Soviet Union—and especially with the Russian military leadership—if the Administration's intervention with Yeltsin became known. The answer might have persuaded Congress not to approve the Bush initiative, the former official says.

Kate Martin, an attorney who is the director of the Center for National Security Studies, a project of the American Civil Liberties Union, says that the "sources and methods" provision is not as important in this case as the provisions of the new law. There is "no doubt" under the law, she says, that Bush was obligated to notify Congress in advance of taking any covert action or as soon as possible afterward. "The purpose was to affect policy in Russia without anyone in the United States knowing about it," Martin explains. "That's the essence of a covert action."

A senior congressional aide with responsibility for intelligence oversight, while acknowledging that the White House "absolutely" had a legal obligation to brief the relevant committees, expresses doubt that Congress would have objected—no matter what the diplomatic risk. "We would have approved of it," the congressional aide says. "Maybe we shouldn't have, but we'd have done it."

Helping someone along with communications intelligence is a presidential prerogative, observes the retired Army Lieu-

tenant General William Odom, who ended his military career in 1988 as the director of the National Security Agency. Odom told me, however, that independent of the notification issue, the transfer of such highly classified information—"if they did it"—results in "a terrible, terrible tradeoff." He said, "Now the Russians know what I know. That is such a huge loss for the future. But it's his intelligence, and the President can use it as he wants." Odom added, "There would be those who would think saving Yeltsin is worth it."

If Odom's fears are justified, the Russian leadership emerged from the August, 1991, coup with a far greater ability to shield sensitive communications from American sensors. The U.S. intelligence community may no longer be in a position to have advance warning of momentous events inside Russia—as it had months before the coup that brought Yeltsin to power.

THOSE few Americans who knew of the critical help given to Yeltsin in August of 1991 say that the intervention was undoubtedly a factor in Yeltsin's increasingly warm relationship with George Bush and in his similar relationship with Bill Clinton. These men, and others currently involved in Russia policy, remain optimistic—at least in talking to a reporter—about U.S. policy. "Just because the old order has collapsed and the new order hasn't stabilized doesn't mean it's all going to hell," one State Department analyst told me. "The worst thing we could do now is write it off. It's high-risk—and also high-yield." The analyst acknowledged that organized crime and anti-Americanism are on the rise. Nonetheless, he added, "there are a lot of Russians not involved in organized crime who are beginning to get a stake in the new economic order." A more senior State Department official talks enthusiastically about how Russians "are starting to build new structures—it's also a huge opportunity."

A much bleaker historical vision comes from one of the Administration's leading experts on Soviet nuclear issues, who admits to being frightened by the growing power of organized crime in Russia and the inadequate security of the Russian nuclear stockpile.

His view is that "there is little to be optimistic about in Russia." He adds, "Hopefully, we will not repeat the 1930s in Germany." The expert, who spends months every year inspecting nuclear storage sites in Russia and the former Soviet republics, described the overall situation there in staccato fashion.

"You have a contracting empire. The bulk of people are doing worse under freedom than ever before. People forget how primitive Russia is—it's Third World. Russians are dreaming about indoor plumbing, having a little car, not living with their parents.

"They can now travel. But they have no money.

"They can now vote. But for whom?

"They can now say what they want. But so what?

"They're not better off." ☘

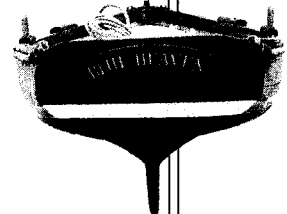
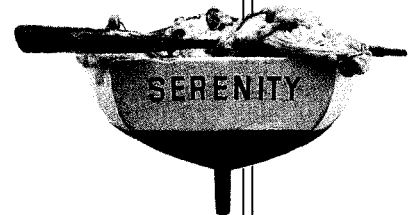


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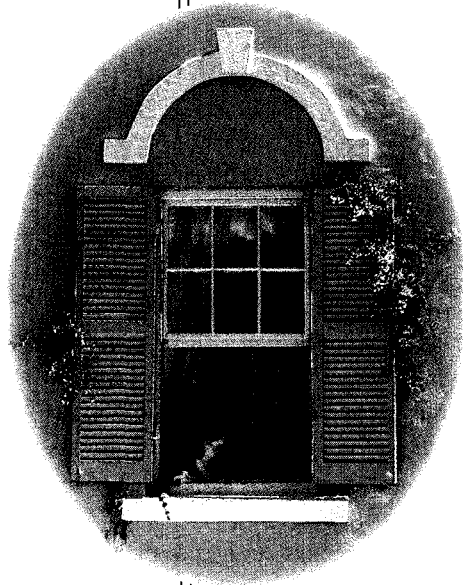
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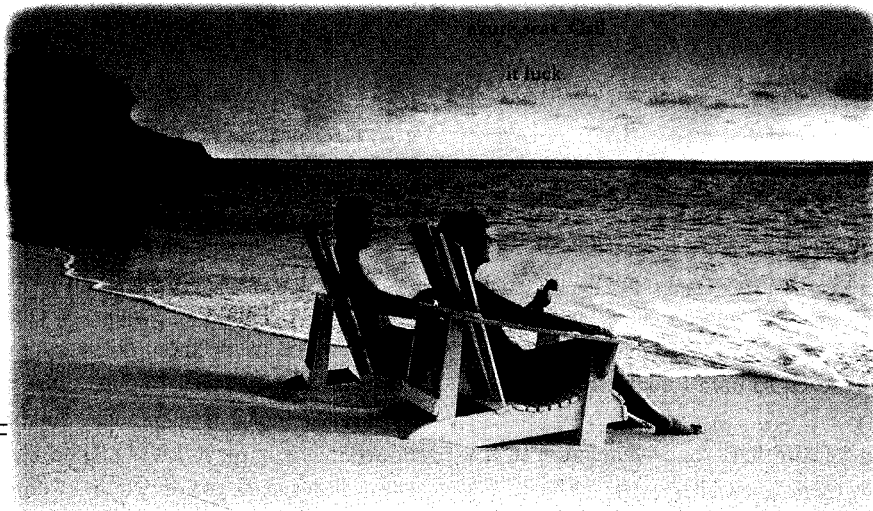
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Morse Code

by SUSAN POWER

MARTIN Lundstrom was white, a North Dakota Swede in the heart of farm country, but he was nevertheless an outcast. He had not one cowlick but three, a trinity of bristling tufts of hair rising from his brown head like three horns. His face was attractive (*I found it pleasing*), nearly sharp-featured, but softened by beauty marks at his temple and chin, and when he smiled, seldom though it was, a delightful dimple puckered his left cheek. The others called him "Tiny Tim," because he walked with a pronounced limp, only partly corrected by a thick orthopedic shoe. When I say "the others," I don't mean the Indians, the Dakota students from our reservation. We Indians were outcasts on our own turf, and left the Germans and Scandinavians to torture one another as they saw fit. We avoided them as much as possible.

By the time I was a senior at Saint Mary's High School, I was a misfit myself, shunned by tribesmen because my mother had too many boyfriends and was rumored to practice Indian medicine. Regina Red Horn became a rude, annoying shadow, and would stare at me in the hall as she sucked on the end of her black braid. Her faction of wistful cheerleader candidates—pretty, athletic girls too swarthy to be selected, but persistently hopeful—pointed at me as they whispered, until I felt speared in the back by their sharp fingernails. In exasperation I dug out the leather pouch containing my old jacks and rubber ball, and wore it to school. When Regina resumed her aloof surveillance, I went up to her, clutching the pouch in my hand. I squeezed so hard I could feel the spiky metal jacks.

"I'll take your eyes," I told her, "and wear them in my bundle. You better aim them somewhere else." I heard her gasp, and very quickly Regina Red Horn and her graceful flock migrated to the other end of the hall. Their disapproval was so potent I could smell it, a metallic odor like scorched

gunpowder, but after it passed in a smoky cloud, all I smelled was the soap on their skin.

I admired Martin Lundstrom from afar, considered him a talented artist and coveted the sketches he scribbled in notebooks. He was forever ripping them out of his binders and throwing them in the wastebasket, from which I retrieved them when no one was looking. I liked the way he drew horses, capturing the weary, cynical posture of stocky farm horses, their heads down and muscles straining, while his elegant, slim-ankled Indian ponies reared at the edge of the page, poised to leap off the paper.

I followed a trail of these drawings straight to the source after weeks of collecting them, smoothing them out, memorizing their lines. I approached him in the school cafeteria, painfully aware that my footsteps echoed in the great room, which had once been a chapel. I looked up and up at the high ceiling, determined to keep my destination a secret until I arrived. Martin Lundstrom occupied the seat closest to

the garbage cans. He was alone, as usual, staring at nothing as he ate a slice of yellow cake. I heard him say, with his mouth quite full, "She's coming over." I paused. I squeezed the drawings too tightly, and they crumpled in my hand.

"She stopped," he said, to no one in particular. I closed the space between us.

"She's here," I told Martin Lundstrom, and he smiled. "I'm Crystal Thunder. I think you can really draw."

He looked at me then, not staring exactly, but with concentration, as if trying to decide the best way to sketch my features. I had a flat, pancake face and glistening eyes I hoped made up for it. I was all one shade, brown hair, brown eyes, dusky skin, the only spot of color being the odd crimson birthmark on my forehead, perfectly bowed in the shape of a horseshoe. At least I had coaxed my straight hair into a stylish shoulder-length flip. I thought he might be pleased to

When I was little, I thought my
mother's lovemaking was her great adventure.

The sounds fascinated me: animal cries,
the shrill creak of her brass
bed, but mostly the *tap, tap* of her knee
knocking against the wall

sketch those lines. Martin ended his inspection and gestured to the nearest chair.

"Have a seat." I was still clutching his discarded pages as I sat down, and he held out his hand for them. "So, she likes my work?"

What was this "she" business?, I wondered. He could have read my mind.

"I don't talk to people much," he said, apologizing. "I tend to think aloud. I've fallen into bad habits." Martin plucked a stub of charcoal from his pants pocket and turned over one of his wrinkled sketches. "Hold still."

His eyes probed me like hooks, and I opened my mouth once or twice; I was a great gasping fish. To ease the tension I crossed my eyes and saw the steep ridge of my nose dividing a world consisting entirely of pairs.

"She shouldn't do that," Martin scolded, so I stopped. His eyes never left my face, I'm certain of it, though I noticed his hand jerking across the paper. What his fingers accomplished, they did using their own vision. He finished as Sister Francis rang a small silver handbell, signaling the end of lunch. He gave me the drawing and then quickly stuffed his hands in his pockets and lurched away. Surely this wasn't my face, which I well know is as round as a griddle and nearly as flat. This face was lovely in its symmetry: cheekbones as neat as equilateral triangles, a firm, rectangular chin, perfectly matched elliptical eyes, irises glittering like faceted gemstones. Even the birthmark was transfigured, into the delicate lips of a rosebud.

MAINT Mary's was scandalized by my relationship with Martin Lundstrom. When we walked down the hall together, we heard rustling on both sides, mouths working overtime.

"Sounds like a plague of grasshoppers chewing a wheatfield," Martin said.

Sister Nora asked me to stay after class one day to help

her wash down the blackboards. As I applied a wet rag to the slate, I heard her wheeze behind me.

"You're a young girl to be so serious about a boy," she breathed. Her congested lungs strangled the words.

"I'm seventeen," I told her. I wouldn't make her task an easy one.

"Have you spoken to your mother about this?"

"Yes," I lied.

"Well, she can't approve. It's a delicate matter for a girl. Her reputation. Remember that." I nodded my head, which didn't satisfy Sister Nora. "Will you?" she pressed.

"Yes, Sister." But what I understood was something different. Most of my classmates were dating, pinned by college men or given a heavy ID bracelet to wear, a ritual I thought was like the tagging of cows. No one cared when Germans dated Swedes or Dakotas dated Assiniboines, as long as like courted like. So Martin and I moved in our own space and ignored the gossip whirling around us, spinning as furiously as dust devils.



MARTIN'S widowed mother worked as a phone operator in Bismarck. He said, "She listens in when she can and gets involved in the problems of strangers. I think they're all the problems she can handle, the ones at a distance."

We agreed to keep our feelings secret from our mothers, a promise I was relieved to make. My

mother might not care that Martin was white, but I was certain she would resent his influence over me. She begrudged Jesus the space He took up in my soul, though I promised her it was only a corner. In my mind He stood off to the side and pinched one edge of my spirit between His cold fingers, as if making ready to fold it.

"So, who should be inside there?" I had once asked her.

"I am your spirit until the day comes when you understand me, and then you should take over."

If I lived to be ninety, I would never understand my mother, all her secrets and memories and desires. She was claiming my soul for all time.

FEW weeks before graduating from high school Martin bought himself a sleek black Thunderbird.

"The first one I've seen in these parts," he said. "A fish out of water."

I hadn't seen another of its kind—this was pickup country—but it didn't look at all out of place. It was meant to swerve down gravel roads like a black snake, and stalk its own shadow across white fields of needlegrass.

"How'd you pay for it?" I asked him.

"I've had a job. No one knows but my mother. No one knows it's me."

He told me he had been designing catalogue covers for Will's Bismarck Seed House since he was fifteen.

"Those covers keep getting more popular. They tell me sales are up," Martin said with a shrug.

I went to the library to look at past issues and spread them out on a heavy oak table. Martin Lundstrom's hormones were loose upon the land. The rural scenes he painted were sensual, pulsing with the desperate energy of puberty. On one cover two women were drawn standing before a lurid sun, carrying baskets of corn in their arms. Their upper lips were damp with tiny beads of perspiration, as sweet as seed pearls, and long tresses of wavy hair clung to their bodies. In another painting a tower silo rose from the ground like a man's organ plunging for the sky. I could sense the movement, feel the earth quiver. I realized why the pictures were so successful. I could just imagine an elderly farmer—one long considered a pillar of the community—carrying a rolled-up catalogue in his back pocket. Now and again he'd reach back to finger the tube, rub it like a good-luck piece. His dreams would be spiced for weeks, as hot as chili peppers, causing him to blush through breakfast and reach more often for his wife.

MARTIN was cautious and gentle with me; he handled me like a wild horse. Not until June did he risk a kiss on the mouth, and as our lips brushed, his eyes snapped wide open, alert for signs of distress.

"It's okay," I murmured. I ran my hands through his hair and paused to finger the cowlicks growing against the grain.

We were parked on a dirt road that bisected a flat plain of mixed grass. Martin had spread an old wool blanket on the hood of his car, and we curled there, gradually relaxing as the heat of the car's engine warmed the blanket and melted our bodies. The sky was a flat stretch of blue and white, a weightless spring quilt settled on our bed. Slowly we undressed, folding our clothes, tucking socks in our shoes and placing the bundles on the roof of the car. As we moved together, I saw my face reflected in Martin's gray eyes. The beautiful girl from his sketch peered back at me, her eyes blinking and filling with tears. I turned my head to the side so that Martin wouldn't see me cry, and I noticed a box elder, our sole witness, perched on a gentle slope. It seemed to

be waving at me, branch arms raised high, its gray bark deeply furrowed with worry lines. It frightened me, and I clung tightly to Martin.

"Crystal," he moaned, and I wanted to hush him.

Don't speak our names aloud, I was tempted to warn. *We aren't alone*. But I could guess how foolish that would sound. Martin would laugh if I told him the bare truth: *That glaring tree is my mother*. She watched us from the slope, her hair wild and fingers snapping, her thick roots buried deep in the earth, so deep they reached that place of nothing but heat and magma—all the planet's churning anger.

I LEARNED that my mother was different when I was five. I was seated on old Mrs. Elk Nation's lap, for she was kind, and allowed me to trail behind her at pow-wows. Her spine impressed me: it was so straight that I liked to think she was born with a sapling backbone, a flexible whip that stiffened to an erect trunk by middle age. She was a good dancer, one of the best, like a tree with elastic roots springing up and down in time to the music. I perched on her lap with pride and enjoyed the way she smoothed back the loose hair at my temples. She must have thought I was hypnotized by the soft touch of her hands, or too young to follow her conversation.

"I feel for this one," she told Emma Two Bulls, a Pine Ridge Sioux who was visiting cousins on our reservation. "This one belongs to that Thunder woman."

"Ohan," said Mrs. Two Bulls. "I heard of her. She messes with things you should leave alone."

"Bad medicine," Mrs. Elk Nation whispered. I could feel her moist gossip breath slide across the part in my hair. "You check which dish she puts out for the feed, and don't you taste any of it."

I scooted to the end of Mrs. Elk Nation's lap and slid off her knees.

"Restless?" she asked me. "Ready to dance again?"

I told her I was hungry, which wasn't true but gave me an excuse to move away from those words. I even rubbed the top of my head to brush off any that had caught in my hair with their mean little thorns.

Until that day I had never doubted my mother. I accepted her presence as easily as my own, and I hadn't missed a father. My earliest memories of her were warm. I could remember being an infant strapped to a cradleboard and tipped against the wall of her kitchen, where I could watch her bead. She used the lazy stitch, picking up nine beads at a time to decorate leggings, moccasins, the yokes of buckskin dresses, purses, pipe bags, and the tapered handles of eagle-feather fans. She had beaded the turtle amulet that dangled from the top of my cradleboard. Sometimes I reached for its stiff horsehair tail and she would tell me, "No, don't touch." She gave me a small beaded lizard to squeeze in my hands, and I could play with it as long as I

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didn't pop it into my mouth. Later I learned that my umbilical cord was sewn inside the turtle's shell to bring me good health and a long life. The lizard amulet was a decoy for harmful spirits, meant to confuse them should they try to steal my protection.

Back then I didn't need amulets, only my tall mother with her beautiful lined face. I wanted to touch her straight nose and crescent eyebrows, run a finger along her chapped, bitten lips. But she was across the room from me, busy with her silver needle and nylon thread, her movements so quick she looked as though she were spinning a web.

Mrs. Elk Nation's words put questions in my head, and they became a nuisance. I thought I could hear them knock together, tumble and click like gambling bones tossed against the back of my cranium. I wondered who my father was, where he was. I wondered why no one on our reservation wore the garments my mother beaded. Her customers were white collectors or Indians of other tribes: Chippewa, Cheyenne, Crow—*never* Dakota. Click. Click. The questions accumulated, without relief. I could not interrogate Anna Thunder, my tall mother who seemed to know everything in the world. I had seen her crush potato bugs and snap the delicate pods of sweet peas. She had never struck me, but I was in awe of her efficient hands.

As the years passed, my questions—too many to keep inside my head—remained unanswered. They spilled out, raising a painful rash on my arms. I fingered the bumps and recognized them for what they were: evidence of my curiosity. Perhaps someone with sensitive fingertips, or someone familiar with Braille, the tactile language, could have read my arms like a book. My mother never trailed a finger along my broken flesh but covered the area with clean white rags, wrapping me like a mummy.

THAT fall, when my figure swelled and I had to sew elastic bands into the waists of my slacks, Martin said, "She should marry me."

"Who should?" I asked. I wanted Martin to be quite clear on this.

"Crystal Thunder should become Crystal Lundstrom." Martin poked his finger through the coil of my flip, and the starched hair curled around it.

"Please," he whispered. "Please." I placed my hands on his shoulders and felt him tremble. His shorter leg was planted behind him and he leaned forward, his weight on the good leg. He looked ready for a fight.

"We'll have to tell our mothers," I said. I didn't ask him, *Where will we go? What will we do for a living?* I knew we could work, and that eventually we would be able to rent our own little place. The only obstacle for me was my fierce mother, Anna Thunder, who could stretch an animal hide with her sharp pegs, scrape it clean, and then work it until the skin was pliable velvet. This was how she worked a per-

son's soul, gaining entry through the eyes. Anna Thunder never blinked. Her wide owl stare penetrated and then smothered.

"My mother won't allow it," I said.

"How can she stop us? We're of age. Crystal can do whatever Crystal wants."

I shook my head, but I told Martin, "Yes. Yes, I will marry you."

He dipped toward me, wrapped his arms around me, and stroked my stiff hair. I wanted to make him happy this last time, give him the answer he wanted, and speak aloud my own dearest wish.

I DISCOVERED my mother beading a small amulet in the shape of a turtle. Its shell was a spiral of red, yellow, and blue beads. I stood behind her in the kitchen doorway, looking over her shoulder as the needle stabbed and disappeared and re-emerged.

"You're carrying a girl," she said. She snipped the nylon thread.

I stumbled forward and grabbed the back of a kitchen chair. Its thatched seat was coming loose; straw poked in every direction. I dropped silently into the chair.

My mother pointed her needle at me. She said, "You've been messing with that lame Swede. I saw you. Now he wants you to run away." I looked at the needle and would not raise my eyes to hers. I wouldn't let her in, not this time.

"He isn't lame. He loves me," I said, in that ridiculous order.

Anna spat into one of the tissues she kept crumpled in her apron pocket.

"He loves you—as if it matters." Laughter rose from her chest. "His feelings are useless dust!"

"I want to marry him," I said, so quietly I thought she couldn't hear me.

"You do whatever you like. Run off with that lame Swede and bear him a dozen peg-leg brats with even less sense than you have. Waste yourself, go ahead. But don't you waste that child." She poked me in the navel. "A soul for a soul."

I was so cold my limbs clenched and shivered, my fingernails turned blue.

"I haven't begun to teach you," she said. "You haven't come into your power, girl; you don't know what you're capable of. You could have your pick of any man, and wouldn't have to settle on just one. I have so much to teach you—ancient ways passed down from the dead to the living."

My teeth chattered and I hugged myself. "I want to be Crystal Lundstrom," I said between cracked lips.

My mother slapped her beadwork on the table and rose from her seat. "You will not waste that child," she promised me. "A soul for a soul."

■ WROTE to Martin Lundstrom, my intended, that I would join him once the child was born. I told him that my mother would help with the pregnancy, but only if I kept to the house and didn't see him until then.

Martin took to driving his Thunderbird right up to the back steps of Anna's square house. "Crystal!" he would shout. "Come to the window!"

And I always did, but hidden by Anna's heavy drapes, so that my poor intended couldn't catch a glimpse of me. If he set foot on the stairs, Anna would open the door and fill its frame, her hefty arms crossed beneath the rock ledge of her chest. She never spoke a word to him; the most she would do was flick her fingers, the rudest gesture a Dakota Indian can make. Eventually Martin would withdraw, clumping noisily down the steps in his mismatched shoes. To my eyes he was as graceful as a goshawk; he floated. One time he sat in the car for a solid hour and I stood just as long behind the curtain, watching his face, touching it, as best I could, with my eyes.

My feelings for Martin hadn't changed, they had just been set aside, somewhere to the left of those for my mother, who now filled the empty places in me. She had never been so patient and affectionate before. She was a dream mother come true. Each night she bathed me in her claw-footed tub, soaped my back and washed my hair, her hands moving in warm circles. She combed my hair with the stiff head of a purple coneflower, a hundred tender strokes, and plaited it in two French braids. She took my feet in her lap and counted the bones, smoothing each one with her thumb. She fed me wild turnips and leafy kale, cabbage stew, fried potatoes, corn on the cob glistening with butter, and moist lemon cake sprinkled with powdered sugar. At night we slept on her wide brass bed, so that she could watch over me even then. I think she sorted out my dreams, teased the unpleasant images from the harmless ones so that I never waked until morning, and the first thing I saw, once I opened my eyes, was my mother's concerned face hovering inches away, her breath as sweet as mint, moving against my cheek.

We passed the long winter indoors, snug beneath blankets of snow. I had my mother to myself; she had banished her boyfriends for the duration, although Roger Bonnin turned up now and again to shovel snow off the roof, clear our chimney, and plow a tunnel from our back door to the gravel road. I felt protected, hidden. I remembered stories the nuns had told us about the catacombs constructed by early Christians. At first I didn't miss the sun, which blazed somewhere above the snow walls. By March, however, I had dark circles under my eyes, a permanent shadow I attributed to the gloom. I missed the broad sky and bright colors, craved the wind and fragrant grasses.

The first thaw came in March, a week before I was due. The

snowbanks still rose on either side of the house, twenty feet high in some places. I could see only a channel of light above our tunnel, a slim band as narrow as a bracelet. I was surrounded by colorless white and was reluctant to step outdoors, for fear it would swallow me up in its nothingness.

"Mama," I called, my pleading voice as high as a child's. "I can't see anything."

My mother helped me into bed and told me to take a nap. "I'll take care of it," she said.

I awakened late in the afternoon, and my mother was there, as if she had never stepped away. I know a song called "Stairway to the Sky," and I have seen religious paintings of stairways lit by God's finger and thronged

with pious Christians, but none could compare to the steps Anna Thunder had carved out of a snowbank, using an ax and a shovel. Her dress was soaked through from the effort and her palms blistered.

"Let's go while there's still sun," she said. She wrapped me in an old Pendleton blanket and guided me up the steep block steps. She pushed from behind, supporting most of my weight until I reached the chilly summit.

The sun's light washed over me and pressed itself into my body. I closed my eyes and tipped my face toward the sun's heat.

"Thank you, Mama. Thank you for this," I murmured.



The baby fluttered a little, moved her hands and feet. "She likes it too," I said. "It really woke her up."

I turned in all directions, searching for a swatch of color. "There." My mother pointed to the distant road, which had been cleared by plows. Pushing up from the road's edge was a cluster of hardy crocuses, thriving despite the cold. They looked like a set of elegant lavender teacups, lonesome for a picnic.

I said, "They're a month early." But my mother didn't seem at all surprised.

"They came out to see you," she told me. "They know how important it is." She held out her hand, offering me a peppermint candy. "Take this in your mouth; when it melts, we should get back inside."

The descent was trickier than the climb. My mother went ahead of me so that I could balance myself by clutching her shoulders. The baby kicked me all the way down, restless, disappointed. *Can't we stay a while longer?*, I imagined her pleading. She was furious with me, and by the time we entered the house, she had tensed her plump body and was fighting for release.

LD Mrs. Elk Nation had told me three years earlier that my father was buried in the Catholic cemetery. "I pass him all the time on my way to visit Albert," she said. "They'd be side by side except for a good-sized chokecherry tree sprouting right between them. I know they enjoy that fruit."

"What's his name? How do you know it's him?" I would have shouted at her, but I didn't have the air.

"Everybody knows," she said. She patted my arm with her crippled hand, frozen with arthritis and as heavy as stone. "Now you're growing up, it's about time somebody told you. Shouldn't be the last to hear. And you have the mark of sadness on you. I want to wash it away." I didn't know whether she meant my expression or the birthmark on my forehead.

"What's his name?" I asked again. I was whispering now.

"Clive Broken Rope," she said. "Born 1918, died 1946."

"The year I was born."

"That's right. That's all I'm going to say now. You ask your mother about the rest. She's the only one who knows for sure."

Mrs. Elk Nation smiled at me and walked away, hoisted her shawl higher across her shoulders, and joined a line of older women dancing at the edge of the powwow circle. They danced close together and matched their movements in perfect time to the drum. I liked the way their shawl fringe overlapped, connecting them like beads strung on a necklace. I made myself watch to push the name back. Clive Broken Rope. If I weren't careful, I would hear ripe chokecherries fall from the tree and strike hollow ground, making my father's bones rattle, his teeth chatter. I think

Mrs. Elk Nation meant well, meant to do right by me. After all, I was fifteen years old and I wanted some of those answers I had scratched up my sore arms longing for. But now I was in a deeper hole—in the red, as they say—because those answers had split up into more questions, multiplying like rabbits.

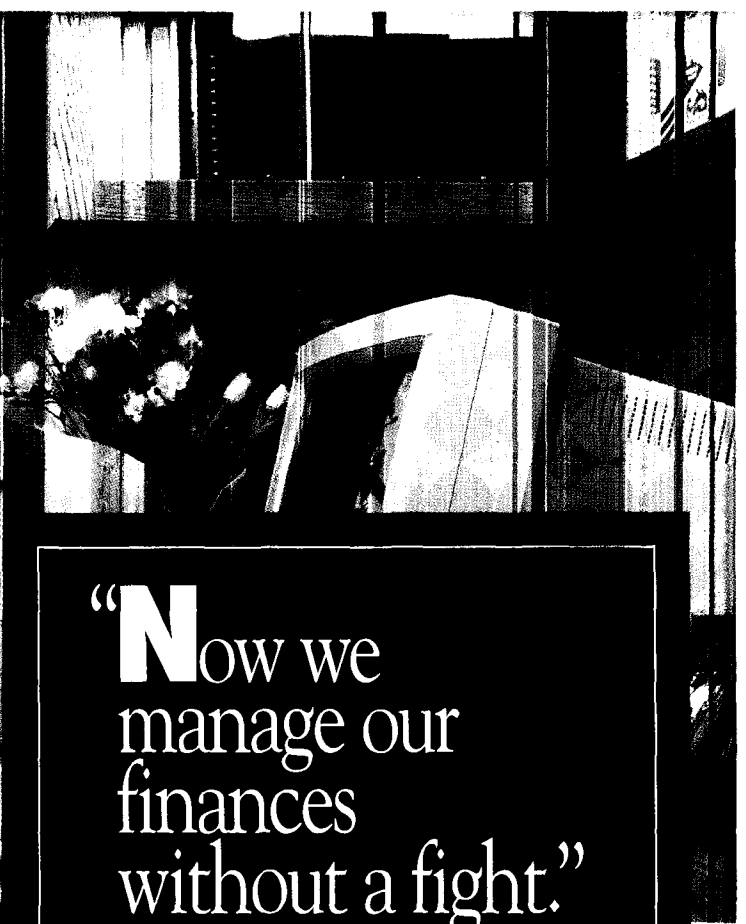
Ask your mother about the rest. I couldn't imagine her telling me secrets. I still saw her the way I had as a child: across miles of cracked linoleum, as massive as a statue, part of the great unknown.

I found my mother in the garden, on her knees in the black dirt. She cast a broad shadow across the plants, as threatening as a storm cloud. She was tending not the vegetables we grew to put on our table but the several varieties of weeds, roots, wildflowers, and herbs that were her private pharmacy. Over the years she had taught me the healing properties of each plant, and made me recite the cure recipes to test my memory: bloodwort for whooping cough or rashes, sweet flag for diabetes, wild onion for bee sting, purple coneflower for rabies or snakebite, fleabane for rheumatism, wild licorice for fever, and on and on.

In a separate plot of land behind our house she grew tall stalks of prairie larkspurs, as high as my waist, the white blossoms sprouting in every direction like a spray of stars.

"Look out for these," she had warned a long time ago, looking pleased as she pinched a creamy petal. "They can be poison." Beside them she had pointed out feathery bundles of prairie parsley. "If you know how to use this plant, you can control weak minds." She broke off the end of one hollow stem and chewed the tiny leaves as if to say she had a strong mind that nothing could bend. I wondered if this was the ingredient she used to capture the affections of young, good-looking men. I could picture her sprinkling their corn soup with the green flakes, watching as, sip after sip, their minds opened to her, peeled back like a nutshell to expose the tasty meat. My mother had a trail of young Sioux men go through her bedroom, men just a scratch older than boys, young enough to be the sons she never had. She didn't collect them for long. They were here one day, gone the next, and I was accustomed to their silent arrival and empty eyes, to seeing her clamp her hands on their wrists, fingers pinching as tight as shackles, to lead them upstairs. If the herb helped her to win power over them, it would be the only plant I'd known her to use. She had a garden full of remedies, but she never attempted to heal anyone. She could have plucked flat clusters of bloodwort, chewed it to a paste, and prepared a poultice for my sore arms, but the plants remained rooted in soil. *I could have done it, but somehow I understood that the garden was hers and not mine, her collection of hoarded knowledge. I felt she was as greedy about the shoots and stems as whites about their gold. Maybe she counted the buds and leaves, and knew exactly what she owned, how much she had coaxed from the fickle ground.*

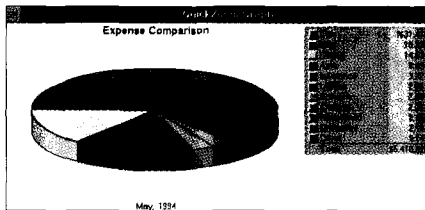
Mrs. Elk Nation was probably still dancing with her



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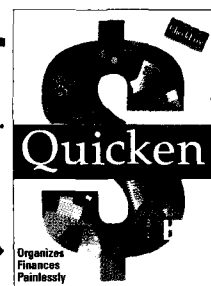
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friends at the powwow grounds, but I thought I saw her staring at me.

"Ma," I said to my mother's hunched back. She still crouched on the ground. She looked up at me. "Ma," I whispered. The questions nearly choked me; they filled my throat and hammered my teeth. Why couldn't I peel them from my tongue?

"Clive Broken Rope," I said. I blinked my eyes then, flinching in anticipation of a big reaction. But my mother's usual vaguely annoyed expression never changed. She put out her hand and I helped her up. She slapped her cotton dress to dust it.

"Those biddies must be squawking," she said to herself. To me she said, "Clive Broken Rope is a long story, and I don't like the way it ends up."

I thought that was the end of it, and started planning ways to get the information from Mrs. Elk Nation. But my mother surprised me. "I'll make us some horsemint tea and then I'll tell you," she said.

My mother blew on her tea, and the steam hid her face. She looked like a ghost. "When your father came to me, he was a dead man. He wanted me to breathe life into him, jump-start his blood. I met him straight out of the Army, when we had an honor dance for all our Second World War heroes. He was in one of those tank regiments that liberated the concentration camps in Germany, and he told me his hair turned white from what he saw, pure white in just a couple of days."

As white as the larkspur, I was thinking. I saw his head bobbing like the bell of a flower.

"All I had to do was cook him a meal, let him talk about his experiences, and he was happy. He said it made him a new man. He started smiling after a bit, and then he could laugh again. He tried to make me laugh, but it wasn't easy. The best trick he knew was imitating that Little Tramp from the silent movies, the one with the Hitler moustache. He wore his big Army boots and turned them out so he could waddle like a duck. He looked like a drunk sick bird. I almost wet my pants every time he did that routine—imagine, a Sioux warrior goofing like that.

"People talked, the way they do, because he was younger. But we didn't care. We married Indian way."

I knew my mother meant "lived in sin," but she wasn't Catholic like me. She didn't have to go to the Catholic reservation school where the old-crow nuns pecked our souls to pieces.

"Your father wasn't wounded in the war, but he came back damaged. At first I didn't notice it; I thought he was getting better all the time. But once he found out I was carrying, the holes in him opened up. I think he was afraid of what he might pass on to you. I don't know. All I know is the memories of that war chewed his mind away."

I wished I could tell her to stop. I could see it all too clearly: my father's skull empty and gleaming, licked clean from

the inside. I heard the sound my mother makes when she cracks bones and eats the marrow.

"You were afraid of him," my mother told me. "Every time he put his hand out to touch my belly, you flipped over. When you got too big to move that much, you kicked his hand away. You already knew something was wrong.

"Your father hit me just once, and that was enough. 'That's the last mistake you'll ever make,' I told him. I didn't care if he was half crazy or had left his mind in Germany, blown to bits like everything else. Nobody does that to me, or mine." My mother got up and poured herself more of the smooth tea. It smelled as cool and clean as virgin snow.

"Some little thing upset him. I don't remember what. He howled and scratched his face so deep that he was bleeding into his collar. I grabbed his hands to stop him, but he knocked me down. When I tried to get up, he kicked me right here." My mother touched her thick middle. "So he kicked you as well. The toe of his boot left that mark on your face."

My hand lifted to the birthmark and massaged the area above my left eye. It was just a birthmark, nothing more, certainly not the pointed edge of my father's boot, tattooing my flesh with his crazy anger. I knew the claim wasn't true, but I believed it.

"Your father died a week before you were born," my mother said.

It was all she would tell me.

I stood up and went to the kitchen window for a breath of fresh air. Waving below me in the soft wind were neat rows of prairie larkspurs. Their white faces nodded at me until I became dizzy and had to look away.

 MARRIED Martin Lundstrom on March 10, 1964, in a tiny office at the state capitol. I had always been impressed by the nineteen-story skyscraper constructed of smooth limestone, but on my wedding day clouds massed behind my eyes, making the sky look bleak and overcast, transforming the majestic building into a cold tower. I wasn't excited by the rare elevator ride, and I was impatient with employees of the state who gawked openly at us. I reached for Martin's hand, straightened my spine, even tilted my chin at a haughty angle. One pink secretary, looking as fluffy as a lamb in a cashmere dress, stared the longest, her jaw creaked open so wide I could count her fillings. Just before we turned a corner and left her sight, I flicked my fingers at her.

Martin grabbed my hand. "Don't be bothered, Crystal. They're just ignorant." He lifted my hand to his lips and warmed it with a soft kiss. "No," he said, "they're just jealous."

Our witnesses were strangers on a coffee break, and every mouth was set in a flat line of grim disapproval. A storm swept through my head, and I needed a great effort of con-

centration to get through the brief ceremony, hear enough of it to respond properly. Once it was over, the chaos descended: thunder cracked in my eardrums, and needles of lightning flashed through my skull. Hailstones the size of jelly beans pounded my brain, shattering my thoughts. I leaned against my new husband. I gave up the future to him.

I AM a weak vessel, I told myself as I peered out the rain-streaked windows of Martin's Thunderbird.

"The state sure hates to see us go; it's crying its eyes out," he said. He clutched my knee.

I am a weak vessel chanted silently in my head, the drone of a familiar prayer.

"We'll hit Chicago tomorrow," Martin told me. "Things'll get better, just wait. How about some music?"

It was Sunday, so all we could tune in were gospel shows or music hours filled with mournful hymns as oppressive as dirges: *I'll cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it someday for a crown.*

Voices soaked with tears of passion swelled in the car; the harmonies strained and nearly collapsed. We drove through a great bath of tears until we reached Minnesota.

"Now we've found the sun!" Martin cried. He rolled down his window and thrust his pale hand into the light. "The sun always makes a difference."

I believe I nodded my head, but it was a useless gesture. The voice of my thoughts was stuck in a groove: rain or shine, it bumped over the same ground.

I am a weak vessel, it sputtered, over and over again.

MARTIN and I rented a two-bedroom apartment on Belmont Avenue, not far from the harbor full of crisp white sailboats, webbed with intricate rigging. Because of a glowing reference letter written by the manager of Will's Bismarck Seed House, Martin was able to secure a position in the advertising department of the *Chicago Tri-*

bune. We were suddenly respectable, saving our money and attending company parties where only a handful of people seemed aware of our clashing colors.

I was determined to make Martin happy in the small ways left to me. My hair was once again firmly pressed into a flip, and I added depth to my face using a dark-brown eyebrow pencil and a tube of coral-red lipstick. I cleaned the apartment regularly and thoroughly, paying attention to even the smallest details. I starched our linen so that it had snap to it and a crisp fragrance, and the creamy white curtains I'd sewn by hand billowed spotlessly at each open window. Potpourri scented every bureau drawer. I scoured the ceilings with a rag-wrapped broom to discourage cobwebs, and I

polished our two fluted wineglasses until they sparkled from the recesses of the kitchen cabinet, though we had yet to use them.

Isabel Lundstrom appeared at our front door on the first Monday in June, while I was beating rugs on our back porch, dust and lint powdering me like pollen. I heard the knock and ran through the long chain of rooms, slinging the door open so suddenly that I frightened Martin's mother, and even myself. We both started.

"Oh," she gasped. "Oh." I had never met Isabel Lundstrom, but I recognized her from a photograph Martin had placed on our mantel.

"Come in, Mrs. Lundstrom, please. Let me help you." She had an

alarming number of suitcases and shopping bags scattered around her feet. I wondered how she had managed the two flights. "I hope you didn't haul these upstairs yourself."

"No, a cabdriver helped me," she said. She finally stepped inside the apartment, and I wrangled with her bags, carrying them into the spare bedroom. One shopping bag was torn at the bottom, and the contents spilled to the floor with a great clatter.

"Not to worry, it's just the *plättpanna*." Isabel pointed to a huge iron pancake pan. I was lucky it hadn't landed on my foot. Despite the heat she was wearing a heavy woolen overcoat, which I helped her remove. Beneath it she wore a



brown cardigan and a yellow scarf tied at her throat. When she cocked her head to the side, I nearly tittered; she was the very picture of a stout meadowlark.

We sat in the narrow kitchen with a view of back porches that looked as precarious as a stack of Legos, our faces hanging over the pot of tea so that we could inhale the steam.

"Smells wonderful," Isabel said, but she didn't look as though she meant it. "I hope a visit won't be inconvenient. Martin is very young, and I want to be certain he's eating properly. His appetite was always poor. I battled so hard to get him to eat any fruit—I sometimes feared he would suffer the shame of scurvy."

Isabel left the table, and I heard her rummaging through her shopping bags. She returned with a sack of oranges in one hand and a tin of tasty, brittle gingersnaps in the other. "These are Martin's all-time favorite cookie. I usually make them only at Christmas, but I wanted to bring him something special."

"This is certainly a treat," I assured her.

She decided to take a nap so that she would be refreshed by the time Martin returned from work. "Just a catnap," she said. "Please wake me one half hour before you think he'll be here. Two days sitting up on the train, I must surely be a wreck. No, don't tell me different. I'm puffed and strained and creaking."

Isabel swept into the spare bedroom, and I put my head down on the table. I needed time to digest this new development, this sudden hitch, but I had dinner to prepare and was still covered with a thick layer of dust. In moments Isabel's dainty snores issued forth from her room, whistling in my ears like a kind of tune. I found I couldn't form a single coherent thought. Just as one floated toward consciousness, as fragile as a bubble, Isabel's piercing note popped it mercilessly, and I remained bewildered.

Martin's arrival sparked a squall of tears; a typhoon washed over him, embraced him, and only reluctantly let him go. Isabel had aged ten years in the time he took to cross the threshold. Her mouth went slack, and her hands developed a subtle tremble.

"She's made such a long trip!" he said—to her, not to me. "Oh, she must be exhausted!"

"Well, yes. My recovery time isn't what it was, but I have only to look at you and all will be well."

This threatened to be a prolonged visit, and I decided then and there that I would be pleasant about it. Isabel would be my penance, my hair shirt, and I willingly shouldered the burden of her visit. Foolishly, I hadn't thought to alter our usual Monday-night menu in honor of Isabel's arrival. I realized my mistake when I began to put the food on the table. It seemed to me bright and ridiculous: clowns' food, fit for a child's birthday party. I served spicy sloppy Joes, a bowl of peas, grape-flavored Kool-Aid, and butterscotch pudding for dessert.

Isabel nibbled at the peas and picked a few morsels of

hamburger from the orange sauce. "Very nice," she said. "Very tasty."

After dinner she offered to wash the dishes. "The cook mustn't do everything," she scolded. "You need your rest after such a spread."

We struggled over a dish—I insisted that she should visit with her son and leave the task to me—and we both relented at the same moment, letting the dish crash to the floor.

"I'll get it!" we both cried, and nearly knocked heads in our haste to pick up the pieces.

Martin poked his head into the kitchen. "Is everything okay?" He didn't wait for an answer but limped toward us, his arms spread wide so that he could embrace us simultaneously. "It's grand to have everyone together!" he said. And for just a moment I was reminded of Tiny Tim, as disloyal as that felt. He was beaming, bouncing a little on the balls of his feet. He never noticed the look that passed between his mother and his wife.

Y life quickly became one long home-economics course. I majored in smorgasbord and minored in patience. I learned to make Swedish pancakes with lingonberry jam, potato griddle cakes, spiced red cabbage, fried salt herring, home-cured ham and pork sausage, limpa bread, shortbread, cardamom coffee cake, almond tortes, and walnut meringues. Martin gained five pounds, and one evening, before he switched off the bedroom light, he thanked me for being so kind to his mother.

"She's getting old," he said.

"Well, sixty-two," I reminded him.

"That's old for some people, especially when they're alone. I think she's doing better with us than she ever did before."

I kissed his mouth to quiet him, and yanked on his cowlicks. Lately they threatened to disappear, so I trained them when I could, bullied them into maintaining their former rebellion.

"Don't ever change," I told my husband.

DISCOVERED an eerie parallel between mother and son. Evidently Martin's reluctance to address people directly was an inherited trait. Isabel wouldn't say anything to correct me, but instead left little notes around the kitchen to guide me. I came to despise her fancy rounded script.

Needs more salt, she taped to casserole lids. Or, *I saved this from burning to a crisp. Cake fell!!* she wrote, when the rebuke was hardly necessary. I even found a note in the bathtub, after I had nearly washed it down the drain. *Too much grit*, she admonished. I switched to another cleanser.

I found her most agreeable when she was dressing her hair for the day. The procedure was complicated, involving the

careful pinning of waves, the arrangement of tortoiseshell combs, and the twisting of fine silver-blond hair. For those twenty minutes she was solemn and quiet and never offered an opinion—written or otherwise—on any subject. I liked to watch her fuss with her waist-length tresses; it was her single vanity. Gradually I came to notice that the ritual was difficult for her, painful. Sometimes her fingers slipped and she'd have to begin again. I offered to help, and for the longest time she refused. Not until autumn, when the damp cold must have penetrated her bones, did she sigh in defeat.

"A simple bun will do," she told me.

"I'm not good at this," I admitted. "But if you help me, tell me what to do, I think I'll get it right eventually."

I think she appreciated the effort and so made one of her own: forcing herself to speak directions, to interrupt my movements with a helpful comment. We managed best when she sat at a low dressing table that Martin had bought from The Salvation Army. We both faced the old warped mirror and watched as her hair was transformed from a tangled mass into a sculpted crown. By December, Isabel allowed me to brush her hair before we dressed it, and I could tell she enjoyed the sensation, for she closed her eyes and her wrinkles smoothed as I applied a hundred tender strokes.

The week before Christmas, Isabel took the brush from my hand as I made ready to fix her hair. She covered my hand with her own. We stared into the mirror, gray eyes finding brown, our hands clasped together and our breathing perfectly still. Her palm was rough from so many years of housework but the touch didn't chafe; her raw hands felt like silk to me.

"I want to show you something," she said. Isabel opened a little drawer in the center of her dressing table and removed a black velvet box.

She said, "My grandmother made this when she first came to this country."

The box opened with a whine, revealing a tiny painted bird's egg, no larger than a thimble. "Isn't it cunning?" she asked. She lifted it from the fabric nest and placed it in my hands. "You see, it's a miniature globe." The egg was blue and its continents worked in cheerful vermilion, each line as delicate as thread.

"She must have used an eyelash," I said, awed by the careful work.

"I don't know how she did it, my mother never told me, but I'd like to tell you a story connected with this little egg."

"You'd better take it first," I said. "I don't want to squash it—it's so fine." We settled the egg back in the box but left the lid open so that we could admire it from a safe distance. I took a seat on Isabel's bed, and she turned her stool to face me.

"I had twin sisters," she said, and then stopped. She fingered the thick yarn fringe of her shawl. "Their names were Beatrice and Dagmar, but everyone just called them 'the angels,' because they were such beautiful little girls. They had

thick blonde ringlets like gold coins, and green eyes Mother said were emeralds stolen from Africa. I adored them, plain and simple. They were five years younger, but I never thought they were a nuisance underfoot. I liked to make up stories to tell them late at night, when they had trouble falling asleep. 'Bell,' they called me. 'Tell us something, Bell.'"

Isabel paused, caressing the egg with one finger. "Mother and I always saved the milk for them to drink. The rest of us drank water. The milk cow must have eaten a toxic weed one time, because she suffered like a poisoned thing, thrashed on the ground, and took forever to die. We didn't kill her, because we kept hoping she'd recover. Cows were so valuable back then.

"When the girls got sick, the doctor came and gave Mother paregoric for the colic. 'But they're poisoned,' Father said. Doctors were like God in those days, and when our doctor said they weren't poisoned, well, they weren't. The angels died no more than an hour after he left. The end was terrible, but they never let go of each other's hands, and my parents ordered a special coffin so they could be buried like that, side by side."

Isabel pinched her nightgown between her fingers. "My parents were distraught. My mother said she would have no life without the angels. I was so strange, I couldn't cry. I missed them, but I couldn't cry at all. Mother decided to bury Grandmother's egg with the angels. 'It passes from mother to daughter,' she said, 'and now is the end of the line.' Mother lifted the white satin coverlet we had spread over them and placed the egg beneath their clasped hands. I was set to watch over my sisters while Father took care of Mother. I guess you know I robbed them. I was wrong, but Crystal, I would do it again. Mother shouldn't have forgotten that I existed."

Isabel rose and shut the lid of the box. "It wasn't the end of the line, and it still isn't. I pass this on to you."

I now possessed two objects I prized above all others: Isabel's painted egg and a beaded turtle amulet I kept hidden beneath my slips. I set them both out on my bureau, one beside the other, and meant to leave them there together. I quickly decided not to. Something about the turtle unnerved me: it looked so alive, so capable of cracking the egg's delicate shell with its hinged jaws, devouring the globe and its vivid continents and slippery oceans.

 HAD given birth to a baby girl. I know this because Anna Thunder said, her voice triumphant, "I *knew* it would be a girl!"

I asked for the umbilical cord so that I could slip it in the turtle amulet I wore around my neck. My mother handed it to me. "I'll stitch it up later," she said. "I'm busy."

Then she cleaned the baby with a warm washcloth and wrapped her in flannel.

Now I'll get to hold her, I thought. But Anna left the room with my baby caught up in her arms.

"Mama, what are you doing?" I cried. She returned moments later with a drink like spiced cider. It soothed me, helped me to relax.

"Everything is fine," she said. "Fine and dandy, just like candy."

Had I heard wrong? My mother sounded foolish, girlish. The world broke apart, and when I tried to fit the pieces back together, I got it wrong. I thought I saw my mother waltzing with the baby. She spun toward the ceiling in defiance of gravity, and I was looking at the soles of her shoes. Then I was flying, or floating, out the window, onto a feather mattress settled in the bed of a pickup truck. Roger Bonnin's face swooped toward mine and then swelled to fill the horizon. I wanted to scream, but my tongue was thick cotton. Snow sparkled in the air, it was crushed diamonds, and its dust covered me until my staring eyes went blind.

Martin found me curled in the back seat of his Thunderbird, empty, wrapped in quilts. When he asked me what had happened, I knew, even though I couldn't remember. My spirit belonged to me, free and clear, for the first time since I had grown in the bowl of my mother's womb. But the price was my daughter's soul. Anna Thunder had stolen my child to raise, to cast in her own image so that she would never die. My hand shook as I reached inside my nightgown. Was anything left? Then relief washed through me; the beaded turtle was there.

"Where is the baby?" Martin asked me. He was digging through the quilts as if she might be nestled there. I covered his warm hands with mine. I sent a chill through him because my touch was ice.

"The baby is dead," I told him.

DO not know my daughter's name, or the shape of her face. In dreams she stands with her back to me, her hair in tight braids, stiff like black ropes.

"Ina," she says, "Mama," but she is speaking to my own mother, who sits before her and looks at me over my daughter's head. Anna smiles. "Such a good girl," she says in these dreams, and although she is looking at me, straight into my eyes, I know she doesn't mean me.

Sometimes I wear the turtle amulet Anna made for my baby. Coiled inside the beaded shell is her umbilical cord, a dry piece of flesh that keeps me tied to the small girl with black braids poking down her back like sharp spears. The amulet is meant to keep her from ill health and other calamities, but I have taken it because a mother must keep her child

safe. If I protect the amulet, then surely I will protect the girl. At least, this is the story I tell myself when I wake up from those dreams where my daughter keeps her back to me and will not turn when I call, will not tip her face in my direction so that I can see if she looks anything like me.

OR as long as I could remember my mother was preoccupied with her boyfriends. She had a great hunger that was never satisfied. They marched up her stairs, as awkward as puppets, their empty eyes proof of some troubled magic. Those eyes were spilled ink, drained of love and hope. If they reflected anything at all, it was surely fear, and not my mother's beautiful lined face.

I understand now that my mother's lovemaking was despair, but when I was little, I thought it was her great adventure. The sounds fascinated me: animal cries, the shrill creak of her brass bed, but mostly the *tap tap* of her knee knocking against the wall. I was on the other side of that barrier, and I liked to press my hands against the flaking plaster and feel the vibrations.

I came to believe that her rhythmic knock was a hidden message, a kind of code. In the library I discovered a thick book on a secret language called International Morse Code: a series of dots and dashes, short raps and long thumps. Finally I could translate my mother's most potent signal, her purest magic. The next night I listened carefully at my post, ear against the wall, jotting marks on a yellow tablet. A pattern was forming, a regular series of sounds played over and over like a song with many verses:

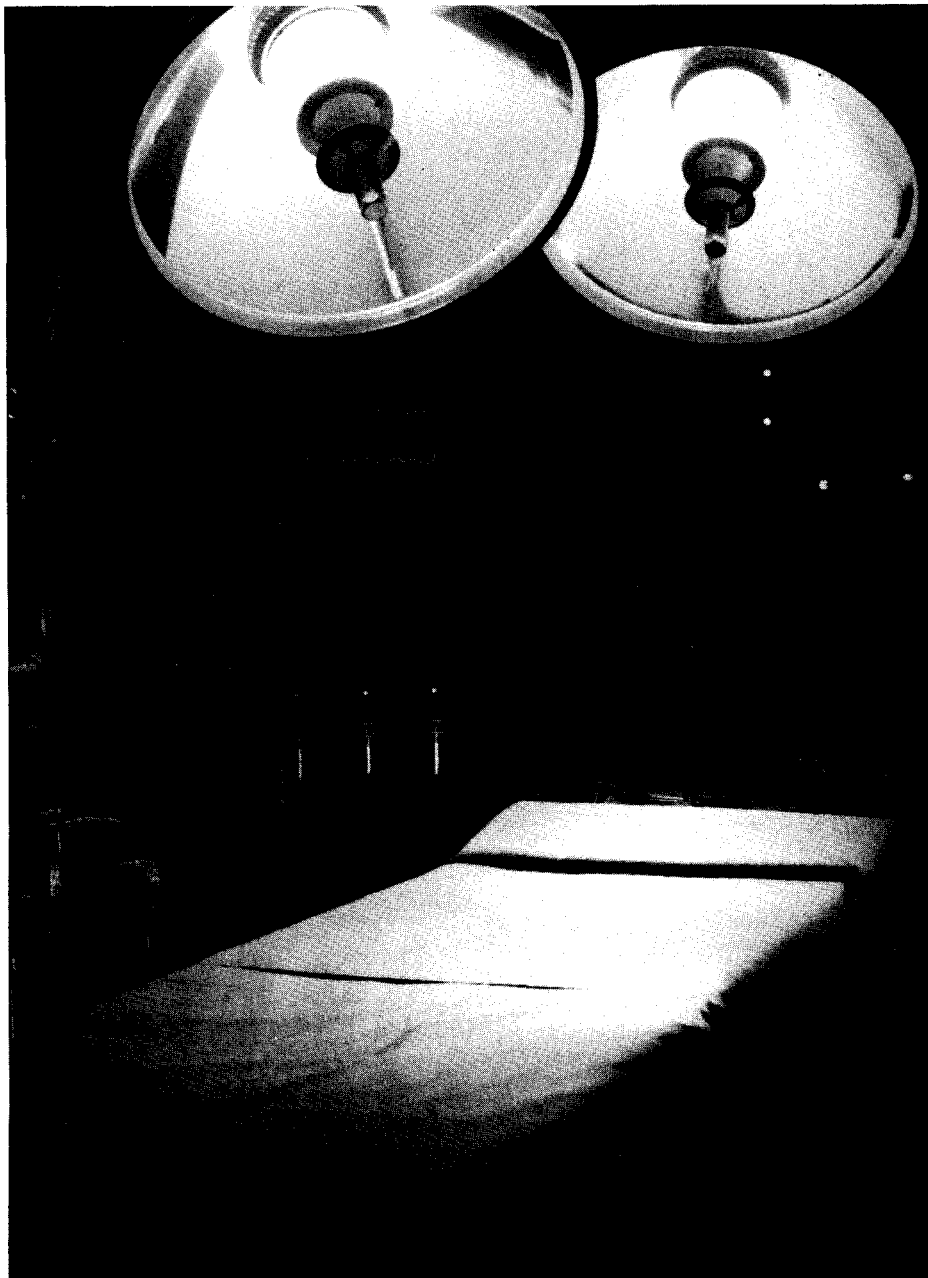
Dash-Dash-Dot / Dot-Dash-Dot / Dot-Dash / Dot-Dot-Dot / Dot-Dot-Dot

Grass, she said. My mother's knee spelled *grass*. I collapsed with disappointment. Was this the great secret I had so eagerly anticipated? I flung the book to the floor and pulled the covers over my head.

Grass. I couldn't escape the word; its stiff tattoo pounded against my wall. I could not make sense of it until I imagined my mother on the plains, surrounded by tall grass, perhaps little bluestem, rising to her shoulder. I could see her move with the stalks, ripple in the wind, her hands in the air and fingers spread like wispy flowers. My mother's roots drilled deep, and she would not be plucked. I thought that if anyone tried, he would tear up the earth and a tongue of flame would shoot from the core, straight to his heart.

Okay, I told myself. *Mama is the grass*. And me? I couldn't have said as a child. But now I know that I am not like Anna Thunder. I am one of those seeds that will push up tentative shoots wherever I land. ☀

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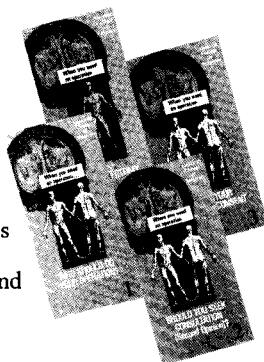
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Federal Offense

by WENDY KAMINER

*Politicians do not care what research shows about the
perverse effects of mandatory sentences or the utility of prisons: they
want more of both, and devil take the experts*

IF a conservative is a liberal who has been mugged, a liberal is a conservative who has been arrested. Hollywood liberals buy guns. The former Reagan Administration official Lyn Nofziger, who was prosecuted in the Wedtech scandal, gives thanks to the American Civil Liberties Union. Ideology can be sorely tested by experience.

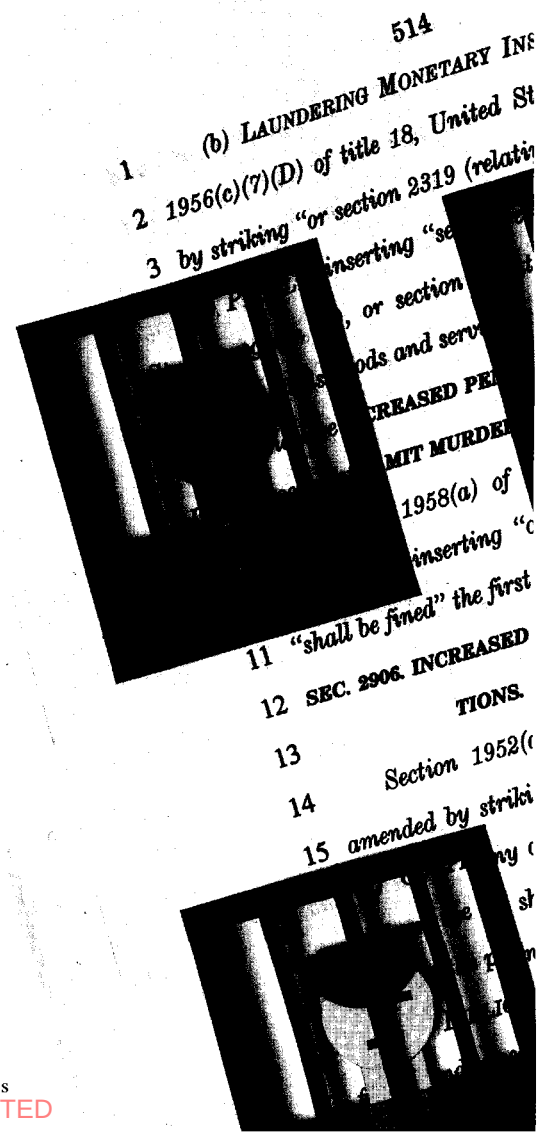
The politics of crime control is, therefore, sometimes a simple matter of arithmetic. There are, of course, more crime victims than criminal defendants, particularly among the voting public, so there are likely to be more conservatives than liberals on the subject of crime—many more. Polling data indicate that nearly 80 percent of the American public supports the death penalty in the absence of an alternative such as life without parole, and this in turn suggests that nearly 80 percent of Americans fear being murdered more than they fear being convicted of murder.

Conservative approaches to crime thus have a natural advantage over liberal ones—an advantage that has been decisive during the recent years of intense social anxiety. Liberalism held sway briefly during the 1960s, at least until the Nixon law-and-order campaign of 1968, not because crime was down (it rose sharply) but, in part, because hope was up. Hope fueled the War on Poverty, the civil-rights movement, and feminism; even the angriest protests of the Vietnam War reflected hope for the possibility of peace.

Today hope seems as out-of-date as beehive hairdos, reaching improbably toward the sky. The hopeful notion that prisons might rehabilitate people has long been dismissed as naive, displaced by a belief in retributive justice and the demand that prisons serve as places of near permanent exile for the incorrigible among us. Some liberals still protest America's uniquely high incarceration rate, tirelessly pointing out that we imprison more people per capita than any other country in the world, but a majority of Americans favor building more prisons, despite their cost, and believe that sentencing practices are excessively lenient.

At the state and federal levels this year's answer to violent crime has been the three-time-loser statute, imposing manda-

tory life sentences without parole on repeat violent offenders, without much regard for the nature of their crimes or their characters. In Washington, which last November became by referendum the first state to enact a three-time-loser law, qualifying "violent" felonies include drunk driving, promoting prostitution, and petty theft. One unintended



consequence of this law may be an increase of violence on the streets: preliminary anecdotal reports from the police suggest that when cornered, offenders may shoot their way out rather than surrender and face life in prison. Three-time-loser laws have also been widely criticized as arbitrary and as burdensome to the nation's prisons and courts. (Such laws are bound to increase the number of trials, since people aren't likely to plead to life imprisonment, resulting in still more delays throughout the system.) Nevertheless, the drive to imprison more people for longer periods of time seems unstoppable, fueled not just by fury and fear but by a sense of resignation. It is as if all we can do is warehouse people until they die or are too old and decrepit to threaten anyone on the outside again.

An Unchangeable Fact of Life?

PUBLIC dismay about crime poses more than a rhetorical challenge to an Administration that came to power urging people to vote their hopes, not their fears. Adopting violence-prevention programs, as Attorney General Janet Reno has advocated for many months, re-

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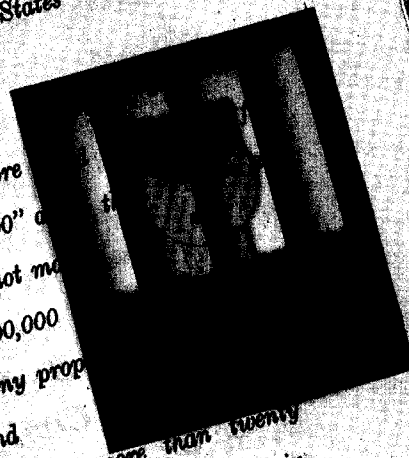
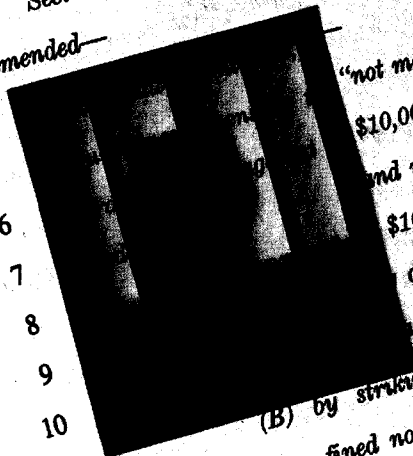
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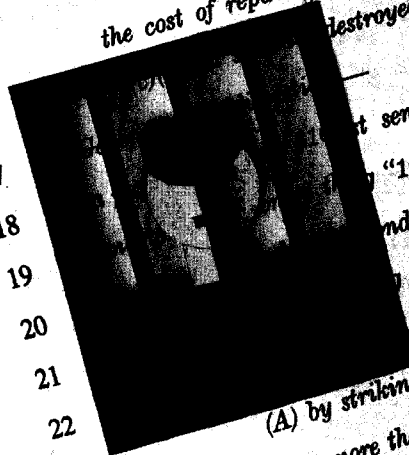
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(A) by striking "not more than ten years or fined not more than \$10,000" and inserting "not less than five years and not more than 20 years, fined the greater of \$100,000 or the cost of re-

quires hope that the federal government in partnership with localities can treat the social pathologies that give rise to crime. Indeed, the assumption that there are identifiable, treatable connections between these pathologies—for example, the neglect and abuse of children—and crime reflects the hopeful notion that violent people are made, not born, and can sometimes be unmade, if intervention comes early enough. Along with faith in the curative powers of good government, programs to treat and prevent violent behavior reflect faith in the malleability of human beings and the capacity of distressed people and communities for self-improvement.

Despite his sunniness about America, Ronald Reagan presented a much darker view of criminality, which still holds popular appeal. There are no social solutions to crime, Reagan asserted in 1981, because crime is not a social problem; “it’s a problem of the human heart.” Reagan cited what he viewed as a dual liberal fallacy about crime—the conviction that ameliorating poverty might reduce crime and the assumption that “there [is] nothing permanent or absolute about man’s nature.”

This bleak vision of crime as an unchangeable fact of life, implicitly equating crime with original sin, dismisses liberalism as utopian. Government can respond to the symptoms with arrest and incarceration, but only God can treat the disease, Reagan implied.

The public-policy expert James Q. Wilson offered a more thoughtful, less biblical variation on this theme in his landmark book *Thinking About Crime*, in which he chided liberals for seeking to treat the root causes of crime. In 1968 John Lindsay, then the mayor of New York City, gave a typical definition of these causes: “the poverty that grips over thirty million of our citizens.” Lindsay added, “If we are to eliminate the crime and violence in this country, we must eliminate the hopelessness, futility, and alienation from which they spring.” It’s not that social reasons for crime don’t ex-



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ist, Wilson wrote, but they are practically impossible to address. “The more we understand the causes of crime, the more we are drawn into the complex and subtle world of attitudes, predispositions, and beliefs, a world in which planned intervention is exceptionally difficult.” In Wilson’s view, the liberal fallacy was the notion that “no problem is adequately addressed unless its causes are eliminated.”

Wilson argued that policy is most effective when it focuses on objective matters like the costs and benefits of crime, not the realm of “the subjective and the familial.” He posited criminals as essentially rational human beings who would be deterred from committing crimes when the associated costs became impractical.

It’s impossible to know how many violent offenders weigh the consequences of their actions. (It’s likely that many who do engage in cost-benefit analyses never get past assuming they won’t be arrested.) Certainly thirteen-year-old boys with guns and a wide range of neurotics, psychotics, and apparently sane,

smart killers like Gary Gilmore tend to act impulsively, without regard for harsh sentencing laws. Nor would the prospect of a prison sentence necessarily deter a young male for whom imprisonment has become a rite of passage or a haven from the street: “three hots and a cot.” A sentence might not even distress his parents. One Boston defense attorney remembers the first time the mother of a client encouraged her not to free him from prison. “At least I’ll know where he is,” she said.

The poignancy of this appeal, and the threatened destruction of several young generations, may force liberals and conservatives alike to reconsider some of their most basic assumptions. “Those mothers in the ghetto love their children,” Senator Orrin Hatch asserts, with all the force of revelation, and he acknowledges that poverty is related to crime (as is a welfare system that “does not stimulate the desire to make something of yourself”). “Some people become

locked in poverty and become embittered in the process," Hatch says. "That's why drugs are so rampant in our society. Kids in the ghetto can make more money pushing drugs than working for the minimum wage." Meanwhile, Jesse Jackson is preaching self-help, an ethic of individual and communal responsibility, and telling African-Americans to "look inward to go forward." President Clinton is emboldened to exhort an African-American congregation to address the violence within their own community.

Mandatory Minimums

THE new talk about crime control has not, however, been a prelude to new programs. It has long been clear that the President is willing to give people the "tough" law-enforcement measures they seem to want—death penalties and three-time-loser laws—and the Senate has been even more anxious to demonstrate toughness on crime. The Senate's \$23 billion crime bill, promising more prisons and police officers, longer sentences, and some fifty new federal death penalties, was passed in a few frenzied weeks last fall, after state and local elections that seemed to crystallize voters' concern about crime.

"If someone came to the Senate floor and said we should barbwire the ankles of anyone who jaywalks, I think it would pass," Senator Joseph Biden said, shortly after voting with ninety of his colleagues to impose mandatory life sentences on people with the bad luck or bad judgment to commit their third "violent" felony on federal property. This bill would have particularly harsh effects on Native Americans who live on federally owned reservations, but it would not affect the majority of offenders nationwide. The small number to whom it could apply would be bound to include people who were more hapless than vicious, given the expansive definitions of "violent" incorporated in the bill. The only vote against this proposal, which promised to be both harsh and ineffective, was cast by Bob Packwood, conscience of the Senate.

Three-time-loser laws need not, of course, be written this stupidly. (The House has offered a narrower, smarter law.) But the more narrowly these laws are drafted, the more redundant they may be. Violent crimes already carry lengthy sentences, and many states have career-criminal laws that impose strict mandatory terms on repeat felony offenders. (In the states that have career-criminal laws, crime rates have generally stayed in line with those in the rest of the country.) The problem that is supposed to be addressed by three-time-loser laws—the early release of violent felons—might best be solved not by inflexible life sentences but by more rational allocations of prison space, decreases in the sentences of nonviolent offenders, and increases in strictly supervised alternatives to prison. More felons are put back on the street by prison overcrowding than by soft-hearted judges or legislators—creatures more mythic than real.

If, however, it is easy to imagine an arguably reasonable, narrowly drawn three-time-loser law, it is practically impossible to imagine state or federal legislators actually drafting one. Limiting the application of a three-time-loser law also limits its political appeal. A legislator who voted to allow for the release of geriatric prisoners after twenty-five or thirty years, or to exempt from the list of qualifying felonies burglaries or robberies in which no one is harmed, would probably be labeled soft on crime. And the recent history of congressional action on sentences demonstrates that lawmakers are less concerned with reducing crime than with signaling their concern about it.

Congress has traditionally committed itself to the promise of strict, sure sentencing, with little regard for consequences or facts. Consider federal sentencing laws. From 1984 to 1990 Congress every two years demonstrated its toughness on crime by enacting mandatory minimum sentences for various drug and firearms offenses, including drug offenses committed near schools, violent crimes (defined broadly) or drug crimes involving the use of a firearm (the firearm triggers a mandatory sentence in addition to the sentence for the underlying offense), the possession of more than five grams of crack cocaine, and any degree of involvement in a drug conspiracy.

These laws have had no demonstrable effect on drug- or gun-related violence but they have greatly increased the number of people taking up space in federal prisons for non-violent, low-level drug offenses. According to one study, in the year ending September, 1992, more than 3,000 drug offenders with no record of violent crime in the previous fifteen years were sentenced to minimum terms of at least five years. From 1984 to 1990 the proportion of people sent to federal prison for drug offenses rose 12 percent, while the proportion of people sentenced for violent crimes and property offenses declined, according to a study by the Federal Judicial Center. Today more than 60 percent of all federal prisoners are serving time for drug offenses, including the simple possession of marijuana or cocaine.

These statistics are hardly news to legislators or policymakers, and stories about people spending five to ten years in federal prison for playing minimal roles in drug conspiracies have begun to appear in the mainstream press. Last November, *The New York Times* featured the case of a twenty-four-year-old man serving ten years in a federal prison because he agreed to help a federal undercover agent find someone selling LSD at a Grateful Dead concert. Relatives of people like this have formed a lobbying group, Families Against Mandatory Minimums, headed by Julie Stewart, whose brother is serving five years for a first offense—growing marijuana at home. Critics of mandatory minimums range from Janet Reno to Orrin Hatch. Hatch does not oppose mandatory minimums in principle, but he acknowledges that they have been "overused" for low-level, nonviolent crimes. Reno has been critical of mandatory minimums

(though her criticisms do not appear to have had much effect on Administration policy).

There is also strong opposition to mandatory sentencing from federal judges, both Republican and Democratic appointees. In one survey a majority of judges and a majority of probation officers, in addition to most defense attorneys, viewed mandatory minimums unfavorably, as did about a third of federal prosecutors.

Widespread, bipartisan dissatisfaction with mandatory minimums, however, is not likely to effect any meaningful reform. Senator Biden, who does not generally support mandatory minimums, considers proposals to reform them utterly unrealistic: "I can count: eighty percent of the Congress and eighty-five percent of the public still believes the misinformed rhetoric about sentencing."

Much of what people don't know about mandatory minimums is included in a 1991 report on them by the U.S. Sentencing Commission, which gently recommended their repeal. The Sentencing Commission was established by Congress in 1984 and charged with promulgating guidelines for sentences in federal cases. This represented a revolution in sentencing which was initially sparked by liberal protests about undue sentence disparity resulting from the broad discretion exercised by judges and parole boards.

A bill to establish a commission had been introduced by Senator Ted Kennedy in 1975. It took nearly ten years for Kennedy's bill to pass the Senate, and by the time the commission was established, the political climate had changed considerably. As Kate Stith and Steve Koh point out in a 1993 article in the *Wake Forest Law Review*, sentence reform was "conceived by liberal reformers as an anti-imprisonment and antidiscrimination measure, but finally born as part of a more conservative law-and-order crime control measure."

Federal sentencing guidelines are stringent and are generally reviled by defense attorneys. They are also quite rigid and complex. Judges are required to rely on a sentencing table, established by the commission, which lists generic offense-severity levels in a vertical column and offenders' characteristics (mainly criminal histories) horizontally, creating a grid on which the judge locates the appropriate sentence range, which is fairly narrow. Judges are not supposed to consider mitigating factors, such as a defendant's family and community ties, employment history, or emotional and mental state. Sentencing becomes a technical task, not one requiring thinking or judgment. Judges have only limited discretion to depart from the guidelines, which have thus always been quite controversial. (The guidelines were challenged on constitutional grounds but upheld by the Supreme Court in 1989.) Still, sentencing guidelines don't eliminate all judicial discretion from sentencing, as the mandatory minimums do. If Congress had stopped at establishing the Sentencing Commission and not gone on to enact so many new mandatory minimums, it would have avoided much of the controversy about sentencing today.

"Pathetic Cases Come Along"

THE establishment of a sentencing commission, however, isn't nearly as dramatic an anti-crime measure as the passage of mandatory-minimum statutes carrying sentences of many years. So, in the same year that Congress empowered the commission to create sentencing guidelines, it enacted new mandatory minimums for drug offenses. This wasn't quite a revolution in sentencing. Federal mandatory minimums date back to 1790. Today, the Sentencing Commission points out, federal penal law comprises a patchwork of about a hundred mandatory-minimum provisions contained in sixty statutes, which make up a little social history of crime. Like the federalization of local crimes, the enactment of mandatory minimums is a congressional show of concern for the crimes of the times. In 1790 piracy carried a mandatory life sentence; causing a vessel to run aground by use of false light carried ten years. In 1888 the bribery of a harbor inspector in Baltimore or New York was made subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of six months. In 1913 a mandatory prison sentence or fine was imposed on commodities-price fixing. In 1934 homicide or kidnapping committed during a bank robbery or larceny was made subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years. In 1965 mandatory life imprisonment was applied to the murder of a President or a member of the executive staff. In the 1980s Congress turned its attention to drug offenses.

All these laws are still on the books; few are enforced. According to the Sentencing Commission, nearly 60,000 offenders were sentenced under mandatory minimums from 1984 to 1990; of the sixty mandatory-minimum statutes only four accounted for 94 percent of these cases, which related to drug offenses or carrying a firearm during a drug-related or violent crime. Of the nearly 7,000 defendants sentenced in fiscal year 1990 under mandatory minimums, 91 percent were primarily drug offenders.

There are, then, essentially two federal sentencing systems in place. People who are not charged under statutes carrying mandatory sentences are sentenced under the commission guidelines. Since the guidelines are stringent, mandatory minimums seem at best redundant when applied to serious cases. At worst, and quite often, they're arbitrary and excessively harsh.

"Pathetic cases come along," the federal appeals court judge Stephen Breyer remarked in a speech to the American Bar Association last August. "No one will ever formulate a system of law for which you don't have to have exceptions." Breyer tells the story of a bank-robbery case involving "a man with the IQ of a seven-year-old who got a toy gun, went to a bank, got seventy dollars to get an operation for his dog, his best friend in the world, turned himself in to the FBI, and the dog died anyway. What should we do? Give him life?"

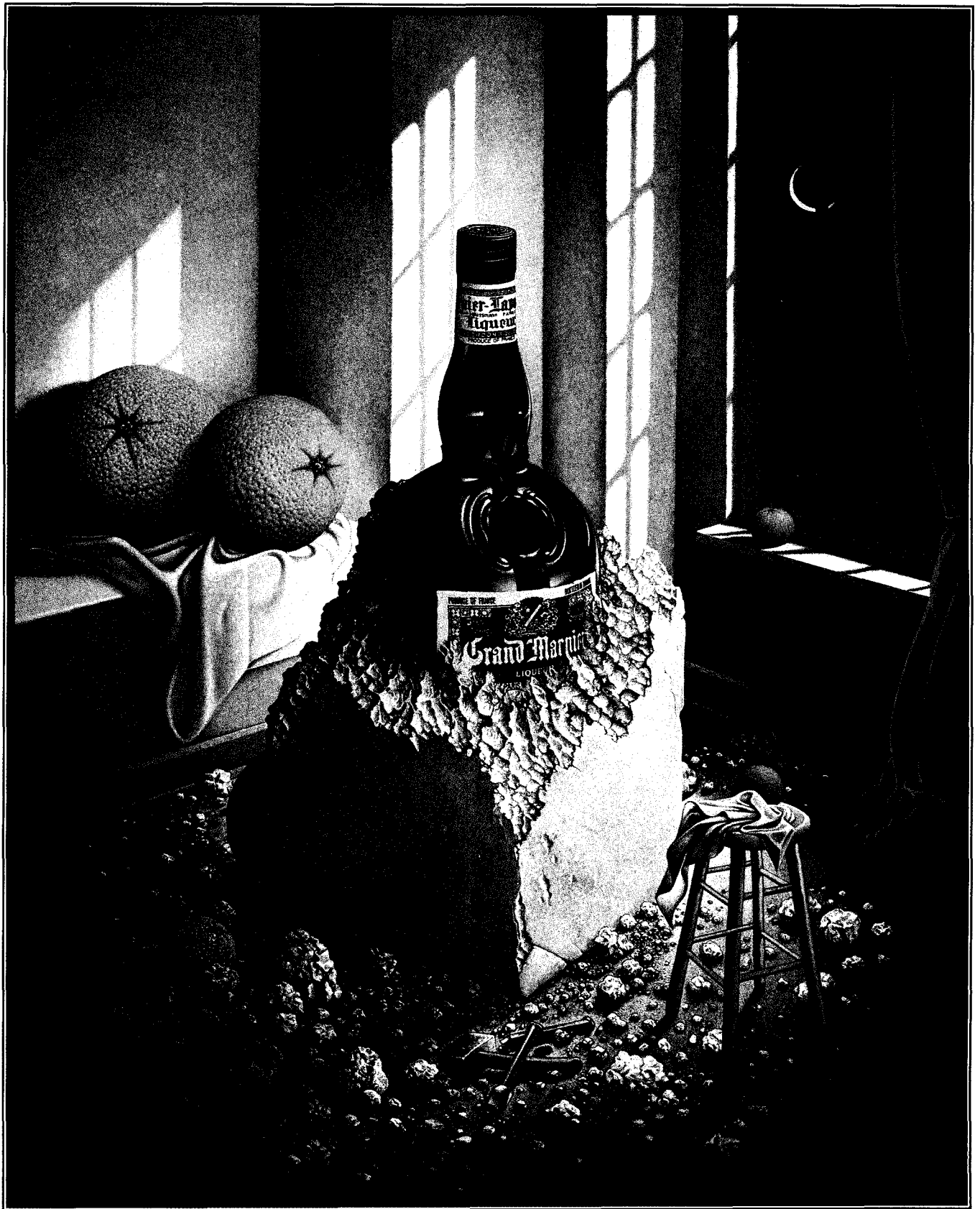
As Judge Breyer's story suggests, mandatory minimum



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sentences hold people strictly liable for their acts, regardless of any mitigating circumstances, which is another way of saying that mandatory minimums preclude individualized determinations of accountability—which is another way of saying they're un-American.

Virtually all of us act immorally if not illegally at least on occasion. We'd like to believe that if we ever get caught or feel compelled to confess, we'll be judged not simply by what we've done but by why we did it and who we are. In other words, we want our acts to be judged in the context of motivation and personal history, and a concept of character that involves more than our worst offenses. People do sometimes commit bad acts for good reasons, which means that guilt—and especially sentences—ought to be determined by considering the actor as well as the act. Two people may behave similarly under different circumstances, calling for different standards of accountability. A retarded man who holds up a bank with a toy gun in order to save his dog ought to be treated more leniently than, say, a successful college student who holds up a bank with a toy gun in order to buy a new car. Even in hard cases involving felony assaults or homicides, motive and character should play some role in sentencing. A woman who shoots her husband because he has been beating her and her children for several years seems less culpable than a woman who shoots her husband for money. Imposing the same mandatory sentence in both cases would be imposing punishment without regard to guilt.

Law Versus Justice

IT'S not surprising that people who bring a sense of justice to the system of mandatory minimums often find themselves at odds with the law. Judge Breyer observes that mandatory-minimum-sentencing schemes encourage disrespect and disregard for the law among the people charged with enforcing it. "You cannot tell human beings to do things they think are totally unfair. They won't do it. They'll figure a way out." The judge may be constrained from imposing a lesser sentence, but "the prosecutor won't prosecute, the juries won't convict." In fact, according to Breyer, many federal prosecutors are using their discretion not to prosecute under mandatory minimums. Mandatory-minimum statutes do not eliminate discretion or disparities in sentencing. They shift discretion from judges to prosecutors.

Pursuant to mandatory-minimum-sentencing laws, prosecutors essentially decide how defendants will be sentenced when they decide how defendants will be charged. This clear usurpation of judicial authority is justified as a way of providing prosecutors with an important bargaining tool: they use the threat of indictment under a mandatory-minimum statute to persuade defendants to cooperate and inform.

But as a practical matter, the defendants most likely to have information for which prosecutors will bargain tend to be more rather than less culpable in the criminal enterprise:

the lower you are in a drug deal, the less you're likely to know, and the less bargaining power you have to stave off an indictment. Federal law also allows judges to depart from the mandatory minimums after conviction and impose lesser sentences if prosecutors request them, claiming that defendants have provided "substantial assistance"—which, once again, tends to reward higher-level defendants and penalize the lowly.

It's not surprising that under this system sentence disparities abound. According to a 1992 report by the Federal Judicial Center, as late as the first half of 1990 nearly 50 percent of offenders who appeared eligible for a mandatory minimum term received a lesser sentence. In addition to disparate treatment of higher- and lower-level defendants, there are regional and racial differences in sentencing practices. The Federal Judicial Center report observed that although blacks have always tended to receive longer sentences than whites, sentence disparities increased following the introduction of new mandatory minimums in the 1980s. Examining data from 1989 and 1990, the Sentencing Commission found that 68 percent of blacks received sentences at or above the minimum, whereas only 57 percent of Hispanics and 54 percent of whites did. Significant racial differences in sentencing remained when the commission took into account the severity of the offense. (In contrast, the commission found, offense behavior did seem to account for differences in the sentencing of males and females.) Calling for further research, the commission nevertheless reported that its findings imply that race plays a role in sentence disparities, which have yet to be acknowledged, much less addressed, by Congress.

If Congress were genuinely interested in truth in sentencing, it would make clear to the public how erratically and arbitrarily mandatory minimums are enforced. It would point out that federal sentencing guidelines already call for very tough sentences for serious crimes. It would explain that defendants are not faceless or fungible: they and their circumstances vary, even when they are charged with the same crime, and judges must have at least limited discretion to vary their sentences.

But there are so few ways for Congress to demonstrate toughness on crime. The Senate passed new mandatory minimums last November, with no apparent opposition from the Administration. As Orrin Hatch concedes, "Mandatory minimums are a political response to violent crime. Let's be honest about it. It's awfully difficult for politicians to vote against them."

Durance Vile

IT'S equally difficult to address rationally the problem of prison overcrowding without rational sentencing policies. But the Senate voted to build new prisons anyway. It allocated \$3 billion for the construction of high-security regional prisons, to be made available to the states on the

condition that they adopt “binding sentencing guideline systems” and require violent felons to serve at least 85 percent of their sentences.

Informed opinion is divided over the merits of regional prisons (which house people from several states). Some say that they’re needed to break up prison gangs that form when people are imprisoned locally. Some argue that regional prisons will separate people not just from fellow gang members but also from their families. Positive familial and community ties are considered primary deterrents to recidivism. The public is not involved in the debate about regional prisons, but it supports a general increase in prison space. Sixty percent of people responding to a *Time/CNN* poll last year said they favored building new prisons even at the cost of a significant tax increase. More striking is the degree of public dissatisfaction with the courts, based on the belief that judges are soft on crime. Eighty-one percent of people surveyed by the National Opinion Research Center agreed that “courts do not deal harshly enough with criminals.” In fact, most public anger at the criminal-justice system seems to be anger at the courts, not at legislators, police officers, or corrections per-

sonnel. The perception that a great many violent felons are serving very little prison time is driving the crime debate.

It’s a perception based primarily on anecdotes—which doesn’t mean it’s false. But periodic stories about people who commit horrific crimes while they’re on probation or parole or awaiting trial mostly provide political pressure to build more prisons, not empirical evidence that more prisons will make us safer.

It’s true that prisons are overcrowded. Representative Barney Frank observes that in some circumstances liberals should support new prison construction, in order to make prisons more humane. The trouble is that prisons are a bit like highways: build them, and a great many people will come. It’s also true that many prisoners do not serve out their full terms. In Texas, for example, people in noncapital cases generally serve only about 20 percent of their sentences, according to an American Bar Association report. And it’s true that many felons (roughly half, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics) convicted by the states are not imprisoned at all.

These are dramatic statistics, but by themselves they’re

JIGSAW PUZZLE IN PREGNANCY

Here is a beginning to harmony and peace.
All tidy on the little farm?
Are all the farmers sleeping?

See how the miles of rock-piled fence
Divide the too-green hillside.
Where are the pigs? Where are the cows?
Why is the sky so wide?

The pink fits in but the gray confounds.
The water stands still. From heat? From grief?
How many haycocks make a farm?
Whose is the shadowy face at the door?

The little inlet of salty water
Lies like a finger behind the house.
Yellow flowers stud the hedges.
Was famine ever a problem at all?

Thatched roof, white wash, veneer of order,
Veneer of calmness, but inside
The kettle’s not on the boil. Why must I
Learn what it means to stand at the door?

The mountains have sat like that for years,
Tilting their way to the waterside.
The splotch on the hill? The rich man’s house
Who has taken a young girl for his bride.

Shall I ride out and tell her to come
To the cottage below, with its meager store?
Could they sit? Would bread cool on the table?
Of what would they speak? The most recent war?

I fit in more pink (there’s been a storm)
But the lake’s still flat and the gray confounds.
Oh women in mourning, on hillside, in valley,
Whose is the shadowy face at the door?

—CHRISTOPHER JANE CORKERY

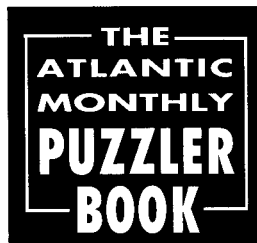
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not terribly informative. It means little to say that convicted felons serve only a fraction of their sentences unless the length of their sentences is known. Judges may take early-release systems into account when they impose sentence, so that, for example, if they want someone to serve six years, they may sentence him to ten. And the fact that many people convicted are not imprisoned may be an argument for improving probationary supervision, not for increasing the prison population, which already stands at nearly one million (more than 700,000 in state prisons and the remainder in federal custody).

"What's most scarce today aren't prison cells but non-prison supervisory programs," according to Mark Kleiman, a professor of public policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University. With three times as many people on probation or parole as are in prison, Kleiman says, "we're spending too much on the inpatients and not enough on the outpatients." He believes that with a few exceptions, such as the people who regularly commit violent crimes and the relatively small proportion of people who commit single crimes that shock the conscience of the community, convicted felons should be subject to heavily supervised probation and alternative sentences that stress mandatory, enforceable drug abstinence. "The trouble with most nonprison programs today," Kleiman says, "is that they're not backed up with the threat of imprisonment. I'd be happy to spend three billion dollars for more prison cells to use as backup to sanction people who don't comply with the terms of their probation or parole. They don't need to be imprisoned for a long time, but they need to be imprisoned every time they don't comply."

Common sense suggests that prescribing long prison sentences for a relatively small proportion of offenders (which is all we can reasonably expect to do) will not deter potential offenders who have no expectation of ever being imprisoned at all. A recent report by the National Research Council (an offshoot of the National Academy of Sciences) estimated that "a 50% increase in the *probability of incarceration* would prevent twice as much violent crime as a 50% increase in the average term of incarceration." Of course, increasing the probability of incarceration would require increasing the probability of arrest and prosecution, not merely a reallocation of prison space. But Mark Kleiman's proposal to use new prisons as backup sanctions for people on probation and parole would at least increase the probability of imprisonment for the great number of "outpatients" who are already caught up in the criminal-justice system. The Senate proposal, which makes the allocation of prison funding conditional on the states' adoption of binding sentencing guidelines, focused instead on further increases in the length of incarceration. Federal lawmakers can, after all, do little to increase the efficiency of local police departments, prosecutors, and courts, even if they can write lots of strict sentencing laws.

The Prison Debate

LENGTHENING prison sentences is not a new idea, or one that has proved effective. From 1975 to 1989 the average prison time served per violent crime tripled, according to the NRC. And the prison population nearly tripled during that same period—because of an increase in sentence length—reflecting, in part, the increased use of mandatory minimums, not an increase in the chance of incarceration, which remained fairly constant. Violent crime declined in the early 1980s but rose in the second half of the decade. The NRC tentatively concluded that the increased imprisonment rate of the 1980s had little effect on violent crime and that further increases would have little effect as well. Liberals agree, sometimes pointing out that violent felons, like athletes, peak early and become less violent as they age, obviating the need for long sentences. Conservatives, however, argue that violent-crime rates would have soared during the eighties had imprisonment rates remained stable. "America would have been a much more dangerous place today if we hadn't built the prisons we built in the 1980s," says Paul McNulty, now the executive director of the First Freedom Coalition, a conservative lobbying group, though he concedes that his claim is impossible to prove—as is the liberal claim that increased incarceration has had no effect or a negative effect on crime.

The prison debate is driven more by ideology than by science. Cost-benefit analyses of increasing prison terms are suspect, because the secondary costs and benefits of both victimization and imprisonment are quite difficult to quantify. As the NRC observed, we have only imprecise estimates of prison's effect on crime. We also have no rational system for identifying and diverting people who aren't dangerous.

No more than 20 to 25 percent of the people in prison are "dangerous career criminals," according to the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. Does this mean we're imprisoning too many people, as the NCCD suggests? Not necessarily. Dangerousness is notoriously difficult to predict, and according to the NRC, most violent crimes are not committed by repeat violent offenders ("dangerous career criminals"); they tend, rather, to be occasional events in long histories of crimes against property.

It is this problem of recidivism that most bedevils debates about prison policy. Conservatives and liberals agree in principle that some people in prison would have been more appropriately sentenced to an alternative correction program. They can even agree that a number of first-time, nonviolent offenders, particularly low-level drug offenders, should not be serving long mandatory minimum sentences. But they disagree about the need to imprison nonviolent repeat offenders. The consensus breaks down over recidivism, Paul McNulty confirms. He believes that with some exceptions, people should have only one opportunity to enjoy an alternative sentence. "If they waste that opportunity to obey the law," they

should not, in most cases, receive another, he suggests. "We wouldn't raise children this way"—with empty threats.

If you believe in imprisoning recidivists, violent or not, "you win the argument about building more prisons every time," McNulty adds. "Surveys of state prisoners show that ninety-three percent of them are either violent criminals or recidivists. The number of people who ought to be released will never be larger than the number of people who are out on the streets and ought to be incarcerated."

But your view of who ought to be incarcerated depends on your ideology and your instincts about the dangers posed by nonviolent recidivists. In fact no one, liberal or conservative, can accurately say how many people in prison today would pose a danger to the community if they were released to strictly supervised parole, or how many would have posed less of a danger had they been sentenced to strictly supervised probation, including mandatory drug treatment and job training. The difficulty of identifying violent offenders

is one reason that three-time-loser laws will probably have little overall effect on violent crime. Advocates argue that three-time-loser laws will decrease violence even if they apply to only a small percentage of offenders, because only a small percentage are responsible for the nation's violent crime. The trouble is, no one can say precisely which offenders make up that percentage.

The unpredictability of dangerousness can, however, be used as an argument for imprisoning practically everyone or practically no one, depending on how the due-process rights of offenders are balanced with those safety interests of the community which are served by incapacitating offenders (putting aside questions about retribution and deterrence). In recent years majorities have erred on what looks like the side of safety. But in addition to the nearly one million people in prison, some three million are on probation or parole. At some point ideology and speculation about recidivism be-



THE DRIVE TO IMPRISON
MORE PEOPLE FOR LONGER PERIODS OF TIME
SEEMS UNSTOPPABLE. IT IS AS IF
ALL WE CAN DO IS WAREHOUSE PEOPLE UNTIL
THEY ARE TOO OLD AND DECREPIT
TO THREATEN ANYONE.

come academic: we're not going to imprison four million people forever.

Occasionally Congress lapses into recognition of this—that there are limits to how many people we can incarcerate and for how long, just as there are limits to what imprisonment and other traditional law-enforcement measures can accomplish. Crime bills passed last fall in both the Senate and the House provided funding for drug treatment for prisoners and gang members, diversion and counseling programs for juveniles, and boot camps—perhaps the trendiest of alternative-sentencing proposals.

Boot camps combine the toughness on crime traditionally demanded by conservatives with traditional liberal expressions of compassion and an all-American belief in self-improvement through discipline and work. Historically, work has been viewed as character-building and has played an important role in the development of penal systems; it can symbolize both repentance and restitution to the community. The Senate allocated \$3 billion for boot camps in what

was presented as one of its more progressive anti-crime votes. Progressives, however, along with researchers, are a bit skeptical about the prospects for boot camps.

Ronald Hampton, a police officer in Washington, D.C., and the executive director of the National Black Police Association, observes that boot camps work for the military because people graduate from them into the military, with jobs to perform, rules to obey, and a disciplinary system to fear. Inmates of civilian boot camps will graduate into anarchy. Nor do boot camps work for everyone in the military, Hampton adds. Some people don't prosper in the service. "That doesn't mean they're not good citizens; it just means they're not good soldiers," he says. In fact, outcome studies of civilian boot camps have been discouraging: their rates of recidivism are no lower than the prisons' rates. Boot camps may pose particular problems for the juveniles they're intended to help if they allow for the mingling of juvenile and adult of-

fenders. There is also concern that the quasi-abusive environment of boot camps will be counterproductive for young offenders with histories of familial abuse. As Mark Kleiman puts it, "If pushing these people around and screaming at them were therapeutic for them, they wouldn't be in boot camp."

Misgivings about boot camps expressed by people who study them and others who work with young offenders, however, are dismissed by politicians who establish them. In the view of John Laub, a professor of criminal justice at Northeastern University, political enthusiasm for boot camps exemplifies the futility of research on criminal-justice issues. Knowledge isn't power in criminal-justice debates; knowledge is irrelevant. Politicians who support boot camps rely on "gut instincts" or "intuition" or fond memories of their own military experiences.

"This is why what we do doesn't matter," Laub says, pointing to Georgia Governor Zell Miller's proud proclamation of his intention to ignore research on boot camps. "Nobody can tell me from some ivory tower that you take a kid, you kick him in the rear end, and it doesn't do any good," Miller told *The New York Times*. "I don't give a damn what they say."

Our Double Standard of Accountability

PROTESTING the influence of politics on policy, you feel a little like Claude Rains protesting gambling at Rick's. Still, it's hard not to be shocked—shocked!—by the utter politicization of criminal-justice debates. These are case studies in demagoguery. Informed debates among elites about public-safety issues seem more than usually irrelevant to public opinion. Politicians profess to believe what they must know is not true.

How are most citizens apt to learn about the criminal-justice system? Amy Fisher docudramas, TV cop shows and crime stories, and talk-show palaver about sensational cases seem to be primary sources of "information" for people who are spared firsthand experience with corrections and courts. The most attention is paid to the least typical cases. The acquittal in the Lorena Bobbitt case and the hung juries in the Menendez cases were followed by weeks of public hand-wringing about the "abuse excuse." We've become too tolerant of criminal behavior, people said, which must have come as a surprise to the roughly 2,800 people on death row and the petty offenders with drug habits, long untreated, who may be subject to life imprisonment as three-time losers. Jurors, and a large segment of the public which ordinarily objectifies less sensational defendants, seemed to empathize with Lorena Bobbitt and the Menendez brothers, treating them with great leniency. That is perhaps what was most re-

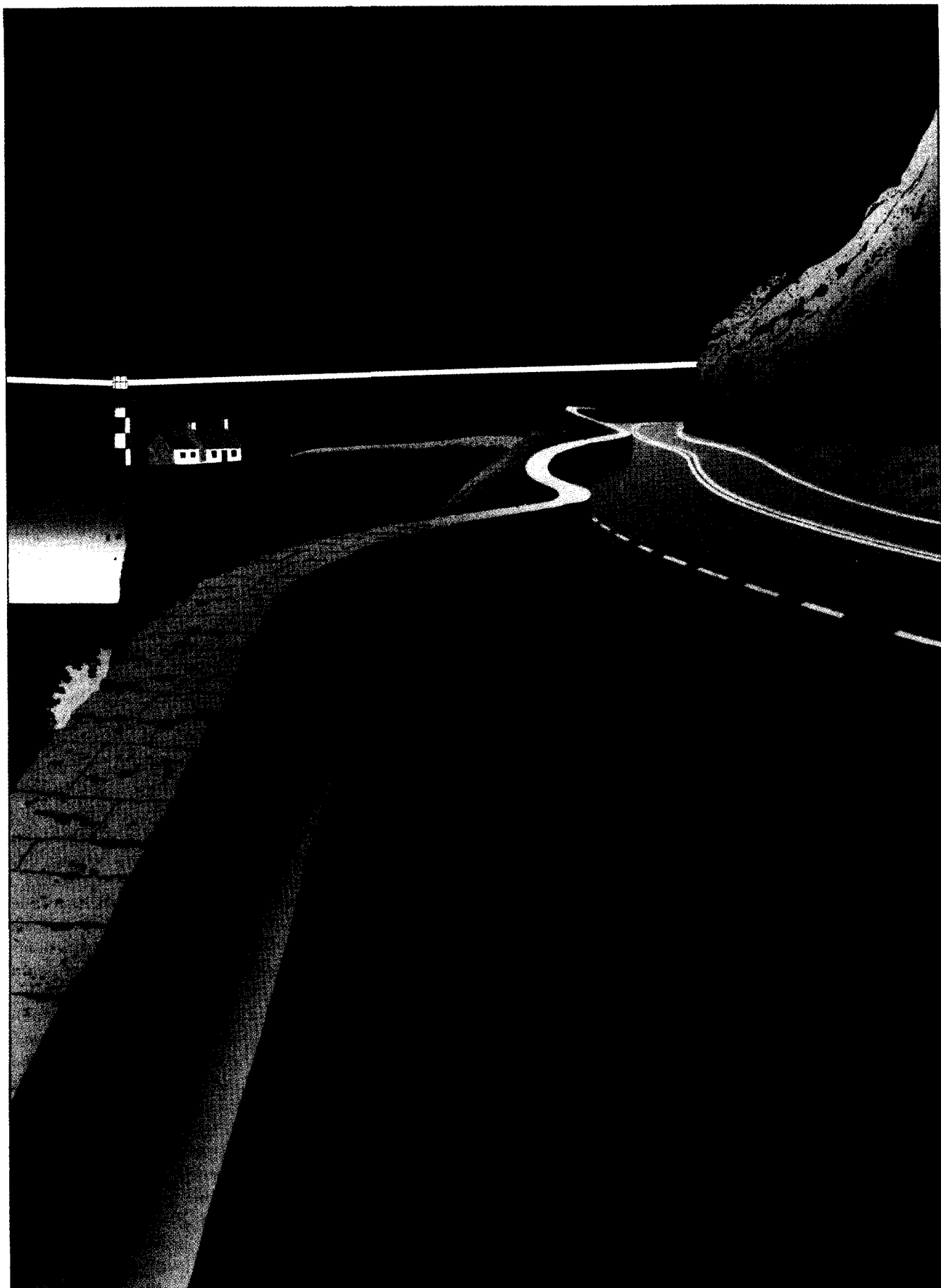
markable about these cases. In general, as the intense demand for harsh, punitive sentencing shows, we're more likely to hold defendants to standards of accountability higher than those we'd apply to ourselves.

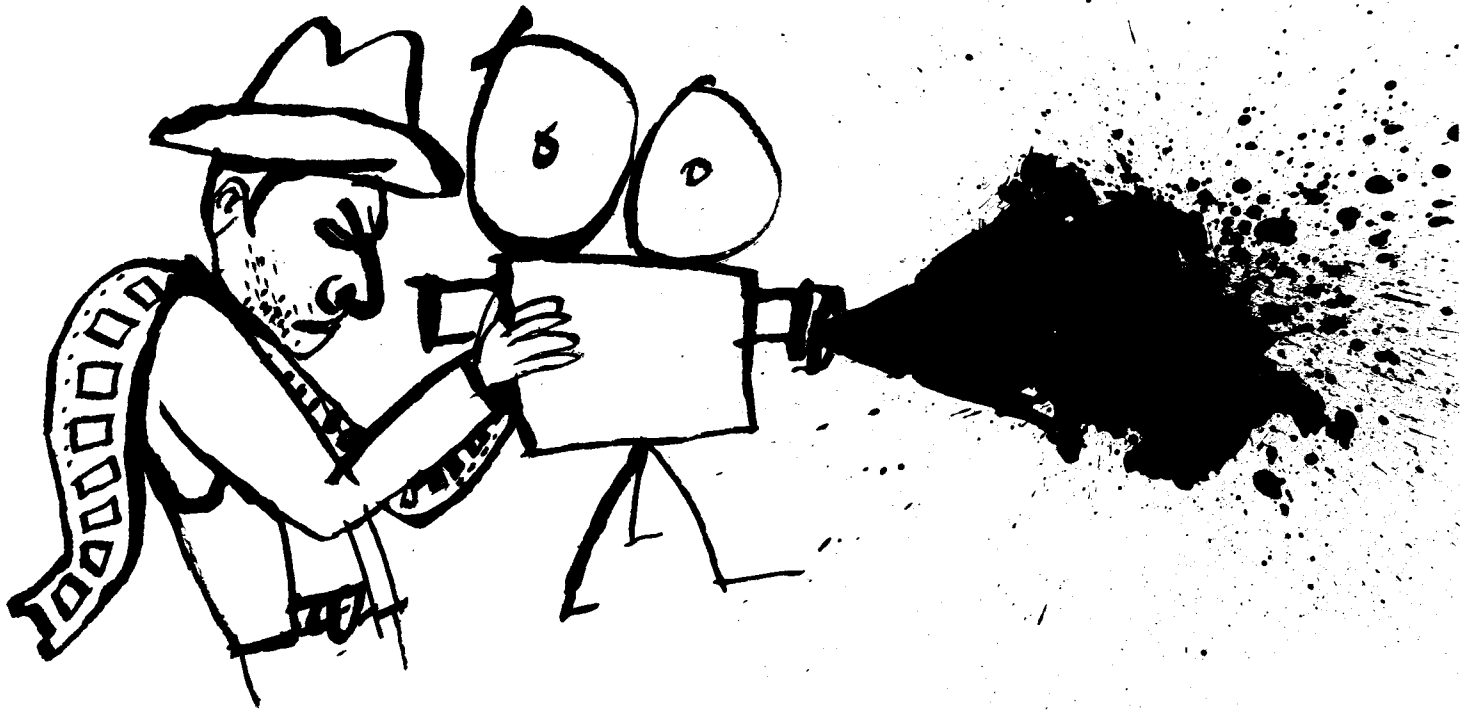
This is rarely recognized as hypocrisy. Many people who haven't been criminally prosecuted or endured the prosecution of a friend or family member tend to regard criminals as "the other." This unwillingness or inability to admit their humanity is facilitated by the anonymity of the vast majority of defendants, whose cases aren't televised; by the increasing senselessness of random violence (it's hard to empathize with a sociopath); and by the awful demographics of crime: the disproportionate involvement of black males in violent crime makes it easy for criminal defendants to be objectified by whites who fear being victimized and don't consider the fact that crime tends to be intraracial (that is, blacks are disproportionately represented as victims, too).

Our double standard of accountability becomes particularly clear when popular notions of criminal justice are compared with popular notions of personal development, which dominated the Bobbitt and Menendez cases. If you argue for leniency in a typical, uncelebrated criminal case, pointing out that the defendant suffered abuse in childhood or that the crime resulted from some post-traumatic stress disorder, you're likely to be dismissed as a bleeding-heart liberal. "We're tired of Twinkie defenses. No one takes responsibility for himself anymore," people say. Meanwhile, millions of Americans are complaining about their own histories of addiction and abuse, refusing to take responsibility for their own bad behavior. Many of us want most people charged with serious crimes to be considered actors, absolutely, so that we can punish them absolutely without qualms, but we often consider ourselves to be acted upon.

If only guilt and innocence were so clear and simple and absolute, instead of merely relative. Of course, all of us are the victims or beneficiaries of forces we never controlled, accidents of upbringing or birth; ultimately, none of us are absolutely responsible for our characters or our actions. But at some point we must assume and assign responsibility. At some point we must treat ourselves and one another as if our crimes were indeed our fault.

Sometimes we have to pass judgment on others, with modesty and reluctance, knowing that our judgments are flawed. That is one of the fearful necessities of a civilized society. Today, in general, we alternate between judging too harshly—condemning people to life sentences or death with an arrogant belief in our own righteousness—and not judging at all. Watch the talk shows and the cases on Court TV and then spend a few days in the criminal courts: they make clear that we lack a consistent, nuanced notion of moral agency, an ethic of relative accountability. How can we claim a sense of justice? ☛





The Homeric Power of Peckinpah's Violence

*Will The Wild Bunch ride again?
The prospect of an NC-17 rating has derailed
a release of the director's cut and may
keep a new generation from experiencing its
electrifying complexities*

WHEN Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* had its premiere, in the summer of 1969, it carried a Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating of R. If it had been rated X, I probably wouldn't have been able to see it (I saw it three times in one week), because no local theater would have run it. Since I had turned seventeen that June, I made it into the movie house easily—and left in an altered state. Few films are as intense in every aspect as *The Wild Bunch*. To view it as I did, in one of those concrete-box

by Michael Sragow

chain movie theaters that dotted the suburban landscape in the sixties, was to grasp the concept of a low-down transcendence. Peckinpah wrenched audiences out of complacency and dropped them into risky, blood-soaked places. His explicit themes—the closing of the frontier, the last gasp of the Western outlaw—weren't ripped from the headlines. But once viewers experienced Peckinpah's marrow-piercing depiction of grizzled outlaws escaping railroad bounty hunters and barging into the Mexican Revolution, they realized

that no movie could be more up-to-date. College revolutionaries took it as a freakish statement on America's homegrown violence and international adventurism, a cowboy version of Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* Pacifists condemned it as a glorification of gunplay.

What struck me, and shook me, wasn't that specific. It had to do with the size of the characters and the gnarly individualism of the storytelling; the tonal blend of effrontery, tenderness, and Rabelaisian gusto; the unprecedented combination of virtuosity and heartbreaking passion. By the time the Bunch had annihilated a Mexican warlord and his army in response to the torture and murder of one of their own, I had accepted them as tainted, improbable heroes. But the real hero was Peckinpah, because he infused every frame with his complicated, fractured, and impassioned spirit. His anti-authoritarianism went beyond radical chic—he curried favor with no one, whether movie mogul, ideologue, or tastemaker. Giving himself over to the gamiest possible example of an aesthetically worn out and socially disreputable genre, he came up with a piece of art whose power couldn't be shrugged off or explained away. *The Wild Bunch* is irreducible. The movie demands that you establish an original relation to it.

It is rare for a contemporary artist to rouse fanatical loyalty, but most of the filmmakers and critics I respect who

came into their own around the time of *The Wild Bunch* gave Peckinpah their fullest measure of devotion—and continue to do so ten years after his death, at the age of fifty-nine.

A YEAR and a half ago, when news leaked out that Warner Bros. planned to release the director's cut of *The Wild Bunch* in 70mm stereo prints, the excitement that swept through the Peckinpah grapevine wasn't merely commemorative or nostalgic. The version of *The Wild Bunch* that Peckinpah prepared for release received commercial theatrical distribution in Europe but not the United States. One eighty-six-second scene was trimmed before the movie's U.S. premiere. After the film made its debut here to pans (William Wolf: "Disgustingly bloody"), raves (Stanley Kauffmann: "Beautiful"), and disappointing box-office returns, the studio (without Peckinpah's knowledge, let alone approval) deleted eight additional minutes from every American-release print. Paul Seydor, now a gifted film editor (*White Men Can't Jump*), is the author of the magisterial, sadly out-of-print *Peckinpah: The Western Films* (1980). When Seydor was an assistant professor of English at the University of Southern California, he discovered that one of the movie's nontheatrical distributors, Twyman Films, was releasing 16mm CinemaScope copies of what Twyman didn't realize (until Seydor told them) was the complete version of *The Wild Bunch*. That's how I saw the director's cut, in a classroom in 1980.

In 1985 everyone got the opportunity to appreciate Peckinpah's *intentions* when Warner Home Video reinstated all the cut footage on tapes and discs. But the videos came out only in pan-and-scan, monophonic editions that blunted the force of Peckinpah's wide-screen images and intricately wrought soundtrack. My first chance to see the film in near-optimum condition came in 1988, when Peckinpah's archivist, Don Hyde, got permission to run his duplicate of the director's own copy at the opening of Hyde's theater, the Raven, in the town of Healdsburg, California. The movie was fresher than ever, and the sound was phenomenal, but the sharpness and color had dulled.

Early last year, when word spread from Warner's offices that the negative was in fine shape and that portions tested for a new 70mm blowup looked thrilling,

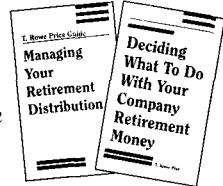
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hopes of seeing Peckinpah's masterpiece in its preferred state ballooned—only to be deflated weeks later. On March 14 Jane Galbraith, of the *Los Angeles Times*, broke the story that Warner Bros. had screened the film for the MPAA rating board, which slapped it with a recommendation of NC-17: "No Children Under 17 Admitted." In three and a half years of existence the NC-17 classification, designed to provide films of adult content with a rating that doesn't carry the stigma of an X, has instead inherited the X's pariah status. TV and newspaper ad departments and major theater chains shun NC-17 movies; so do the big studios, which depend on broad-based publicity and exhibition. The world's largest video-rental chain, Blockbuster Video, won't stock NC-17 (though you can find soft-core porn—unrated or R-rated—in some Blockbuster outlets). Warner Bros. has never distributed an NC-17 movie; indeed, the only big-studio release to have carried an NC-17 rating is Philip Kaufman's independently produced *Henry & June*, which in 1990 brought about the creation of the category in the first place. Predictably, Warner canceled its plan to showcase *The Wild Bunch* in Los Angeles and San Francisco last spring; in November the company's domestic distribution chief, Barry Reardon, said that he hoped to get it out this year.

The unreported aspect of this snafu is that Warner Bros. didn't have to resubmit the movie to the rating board. The MPAA had already given Peckinpah's version an R rating back in 1969. To get a more commercial running time after it had been rated, Warner Bros. sheared several flashbacks, actors' bits, scraps of dialogue, and a huge action set piece that in no way extended the boundaries of the film's sex and violence. (In Europe the director's cut ran as a prestige release in the best theaters of the biggest cities, with reserved seats and an intermission.) Although Reardon told me in a phone conversation that roughly eight minutes in the refitted version had never been seen before, that can be true only if Warner intends to include footage that Peckinpah himself edited out, before the premiere—which would invalidate the "director's cut" label. In a letter to Jack Valenti, the

president of the MPAA, protesting the NC-17 rating, David Weddle, the author of the groundbreaking biography *If They Move . . . Kill 'Em: The Life and Times of Sam Peckinpah*, wrote that after going through Peckinpah's production files for *The Wild Bunch*, "including memos on all phases of negotiations with the MPAA," he believed there was no question that the "uncut" version, which Warner Bros. scheduled for release last year, "is the exact same version" that the MPAA originally rated R.

Why would a movie that was rated R in 1969 be considered NC-17 in 1993? When I asked Richard Heffner, the chairman of the MPAA / National Association of Theater Owners Classification and Rating Administration, he said, "The basic point is that we make every effort to reflect contemporary parental attitudes, and those attitudes have changed in a number of areas. It used to be that if you showed a single bare breast, you got an R; we would not automatically give that film an R in 1993. So, too, correctly gauging contemporary parental attitudes, the board is now tougher on violence." But have anti-violence standards toughened in the current frenzy to blame movies and TV for the violence in the streets? Or is *The Wild Bunch* being penalized because its galvanizing violence is emotionally and aesthetically complex, and thus challenging? When Vincent Canby, of *The New York Times*, presented a "mayhem report" in 1990, he found that Peckinpah's approximate onscreen body count of eighty-nine, although high, paled before that of the R-rated *Die Hard 2*, whose total was 264. Canby said, "There is not a moment [in *The Wild Bunch*] when the audience laughs at the spectacle of death as it does during *Total Recall*. The violence of *The Wild Bunch* is as sorrowful as it is shocking. The film is a classic."

Actually, there is one moment when the audience laughs at the spectacle of death, after a manic Bunch member named Crazy Lee drops three assailants like a row of clay pigeons, along with many moments when the violence is "as sorrowful as it is shocking." Peckinpah elicited all possible reactions to violence and then turned them against one another—that's part of what makes the film so daring. There's nothing *gloating* about the

carnage (as there is in so many of today's R-rated action hits), and because it's integral to Peckinpah's story about outlaws at trail's end, it leaves a ravaging, mournful residue. The MPAA has recommended NC-17 for Peckinpah's masterwork when blood-feasts starring Arnold Schwarzenegger or Sylvester Stallone are normally awarded Rs. That's similar to the organization's refusing to present an R to *Henry & June*, a tender, ironical look at a woman's sexual awakening, and then willingly bestowing an R (after slight re-editing) on the titillating-or-nothing *Basic Instinct*. Movies that reduce violence and sex to gimmicks and squiggles are less threatening than those that view them with sardonicism, wisdom, and astonishment. At *Basic Instinct* or *Die Hard 2* it's easier to use the phrase "It's only a movie" to brush away any momentary upset than it is at *Henry & June* or *The Wild Bunch*.

The Wild Bunch is ideal for intelligent adolescents, because Peckinpah forces viewers to question their responses to everything, including its amazing surges of sanguinary imagery. Grungy though its characters may be, the movie does have inspirational qualities. Lacerating and self-lacerating, Peckinpah makes movie directing seem enticingly, foolhardily heroic: he explores extremes of thought, feeling, and behavior without hesitation, apology, or afterthought, and offers as justification only the aesthetic potency and lived experience of the work itself.

DESCRIBING the opening sequence alone should convey the packed nature of Peckinpah's movie to those who have viewed it only on TV; watching it can awaken and stretch slumbering portions of the adult brain, and change the way teenagers see. From the very first shot Peckinpah puts new mysteries into Old West mythmaking. The director presents his initial image—five mounted men in circa 1913 U.S. Army uniforms, riding along railroad tracks—in the starkest black-and-white chiaroscuro, freezing the action as the kickoff credit flashes on the screen. The design resembles an inkblot rendition of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Then Peckinpah unfreezes the action and brings it into full, vibrant color. Even those who don't recognize William Holden and Ernest Borgnine, the stars of the movie, react to the plethora of ominous overtones and undertones ema-



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1. **Reduce annual immigration to about 200,000** so that it is in rough balance with emigration (out-migration). Then, immigration will no longer contribute significantly to our population growth, as it does now.

2. **Lower our fertility rate** (the average number of children per woman) from the present 2.1 to around 1.5 and maintain it at that level for several decades. We believe that non-coercive financial incentives will be necessary in order to reach that goal.

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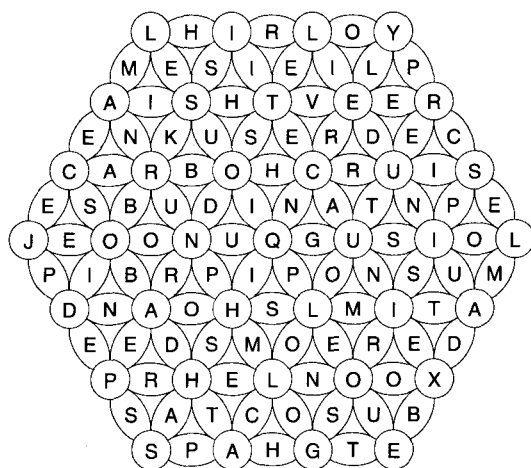
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nating from Holden's gritty, wary mien, the odd, unsettling detail of a man sweeping the railroad tracks, and the enigmatic tingle of Jerry Fielding's music. Peckinpah shifts between color action and black-and-white stills throughout the opening-credit sequence—a suspenseful delaying tactic that becomes a poetic device, foreshadowing the horrors and beauties of a story about men engraved in the past. The riders pass a group of children who giggle at the sight of scorpions being devoured by a cageful of red ants. The Bunch are the scorpions; the bounty hunters, the railroad men, and the teetotaling citizenry awaiting them in the south Texas town of San Rafael are the red ants. The twentieth century is the cage; the youngsters are capricious gods, toying with the fate of ants and scorpions alike.

The whole movie is about dastardly and heroic acts performed on the brink of extinction. Entering San Rafael, the Bunch amble past a belligerent temperance meeting as the mayor (Dub Taylor) decries the soul-depleting sinfulness of drink to an audience filled with hatchet-faced women. The iconoclastic treatment of children and proper townsfolk adds to the gathering tension. Peckinpah takes the traditional suspense hook of strangers loping into a sleepy town and pushes it to the point of volatility. While furtively checking out the Bunch members already stationed around Main Street, Holden bumps into a genteel old woman who drops her string-tied packages. Their mild collision resonates like a kettle-drum. With the utmost courtliness Holden picks up the parcels. Then Borgnine offers to carry them while Holden lends the woman his arm. That's when anyone receptive to Peckinpah's artistry begins to feel high-voltage exhilaration.

Peckinpah and his co-writer, Walon Green, working from a story by Green and Roy N. Sickner, twist the normal rooting interests of Westerns and other male-oriented action movies. It's elating to observe a tight-knit group execute a plan and even improvise around it; by the time Peckinpah provides glimpses of the bounty hunters waiting on the rooftops to ambush Holden and his men, the audience is inclined toward the Bunch's side. But Peckinpah refuses to pay them knee-jerk melodramatic allegiance. These are hard guys—thieves and murderers. Just before Holden and company enter the railroad's

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administrative offices, the senior clerk spouts one of the movie's key lines: "I don't care what you meant to do, it's what you did I don't like." Seconds later Holden lifts the man from his seat, throws him against the wall, and pronounces, "If they move . . . kill 'em." Against Holden's still portrait flash the words "Directed by Sam Peckinpah"—the boldest directorial signature in movie history.

WITH characteristic audacity Peckinpah takes half an hour to identify all the antiheroes by name. But through word, gesture, and action he cues the audience in to their characters, and then thrusts them into a cataclysmic gun battle. The total conviction of the entire cast makes Peckinpah's oblique introductions memorable. Holden is Pike Bishop, the charismatic, no-nonsense leader of the Bunch; Borgnine is Dutch, his dogged, faithful second-in-command; Jaime Sanchez is the alert, graceful Angel, the Bunch's only Mexican (and its one out-and-out idealist); Warren Oates and Ben Johnson are the scurrilous Gorch brothers, Lyle and Tector; Bo Hopkins is Crazy Lee, who has unforgettable psychotic eyes. Pike's nemeses are his ex-partner, Deke Thornton (Robert Ryan), a haunted man who has been hired out of Yuma Prison to hunt Pike down; the ruthless railroad security chief Harrigan (Albert Dekker); and a scurvy band of "gutter trash" (including Strother Martin and L. Q. Jones) out for bounty.

Neither side has any compunction about endangering the people in the temperance parade. When Angel spots opposing rifles on a rooftop, Pike marshals his team, completes his mission—and kicks the senior clerk into the path of the oncoming marchers. In the prolonged explosion that follows, the Bunch, desperate to get out of town, treat the citizens as shields and impediments, while the railroad men and bounty hunters fire at will into the crowd. Still, Deke Thornton, who disdains the greedy lowlifes who surround him and disparages Harrigan as a smug, mercenary manipulator, will say of the Bunch, "We're after *men*—and I wish to God I was with them."

Peckinpah isn't so adoring. It's a Bunch member, Crazy Lee, who exhibits the most terrifying and erratic (and darkly comic) behavior. On Pike's orders he holds two clerks and a female customer hostage at the railroad office during the

shootout. He punishes the woman for calling him "trash" by sticking his tongue in her ear, and then forces his prisoners to sing the marchers' hymn, "Shall We Gather at the River?" Yet Peckinpah makes us feel a warped affection for Lee. He's a quick-draw artist, Pike's loyal soldier, and a homicidal jester all at once. As the surviving Bunch members make their escape to Mexico, Freddie Sykes (Edmond O'Brien), the eldest of Pike's gang and, next to Dutch, Pike's closest friend, reveals that Crazy Lee was his grandson. As Dutch later says of Angel, Sykes's grandson "played his string right out to the end."

Peckinpah's treatment of individual acts of violence is electrifyingly ambiguous. He and his cinematographer, Lucien Ballard (with input from the editor, Lou Lombardo), shot the action scenes not in simple slow motion but at varying rates of speed; Peckinpah cuts among speeds—and between parallel displays of mayhem—as he shifts perspectives. The results challenge a viewer's powers of perception and empathy. At one point a boy and a girl cling to each other as they witness death being choreographed by bullets. When an outlaw rides by at full gallop and grabs the saddlebags out of a dead man's hands, their expression mingles shock with awe and, possibly, delight. That one supercharged instant exemplifies Peckinpah's achievement throughout the film: he creates indelible images of Western legendry in an alternately tragic and ironic modern context.

THE most extraordinary aspect of *The Wild Bunch* is that the movie ends in a bloodbath even wilder than the one in San Rafael, but for Pike's crew (and the audience) it's an act of redemption. What happens in between, Peckinpah once remarked, is that the killers go to Mexico.

Peckinpah can be as incisive as John Huston in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* when delineating the lure of gold: Pike advises Angel, "Ten thousand cuts an awful lot of family ties." But somewhere along the line money ceases to be an issue: what's at stake is the death of honor. The transformation of the Bunch begins when Pike and his men sojourn in Angel's village. Even after Angel nearly gets the whole Bunch killed (the warlord Mapache

has stolen his girl, so he shoots her while she's sitting in Mapache's lap), the men remain loyal to him. When they make a deal to steal American rifles for Mapache, they agree to allow Angel to steal one case for his villagers. The caper works like a charm, with the unexpected plus of temporarily debilitating Thornton's bounty hunters. But the mother of Angel's beloved tells Mapache about the stolen guns, and the chieftain's thugs torture Angel. The gun job has been crucial for Pike, not just

because of the money or some illusion that it will give him a new start but because, as the restored flashbacks illustrate, he has consistently screwed up his life and those of

the people closest to him—the one woman he loved, and Deke Thornton, and even Freddie Sykes. Pike promises, "This time we do it right." And for once he does. But the persecution of Angel keeps him from savoring his victory—and leads the Bunch to a glorious group sacrifice.

In Weddle's book Peckinpah's longtime collaborator, Jim Silke, says,

The whole idea was, who would really do that—rob and kill, steal guns, and yet in the end give the guns away to the peasants and go back for Angel and die for him?

Peckinpah set about answering that question partly by investing characters like Deke and Pike with his own emotional topography. Even at what now looks like the peak of his career, Peckinpah knew about defeat and failure, betrayal and busted relationships: after the critical success of his second feature, *Ride the High Country* (1962), he'd been shut out of the editing room on *Major Dundee* (1965), fired after a few days on the set of *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965), and barred from features for most of the rest of the decade. In her brilliant review of *The Killer Elite* (1975) Pauline Kael analyzed Peckinpah's "nihilist poetry" in terms of his hatred for the modern corporate world. It's there in embryo in *The Wild Bunch*—in the paid-for bondage of Deke Thornton to the railroad, in the ominous connection between Mapache and his First World War-era German advisers, in the naiveté and hypocrisy and malice that permeate the representatives of the straight, moralistic world. Pike may make his kamikaze



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Peace with Egypt is the coldest possible. For its agreement to make true peace with Israel, Egypt received the huge Sinai Peninsula in which Israel had invested over \$10 billion. It had created flourishing cities, some of the most advanced military and naval installations in the world, and had developed oil fields that would have made it energy independent for the foreseeable future. Without firing a shot, Egypt received all of this, plus generous grants from the United States—\$40 billion to date. What

Egypt gave in return was a piece of paper. And even that was hedged. It would allow

"Israel's present government must be commended for proceeding with the greatest caution in the current peace negotiations."

Egypt to join in an "Arab War" against Israel. The peace between Israel and Egypt, which the Israelis had envisioned to be like the peace between Germany and France, turned out, unfortunately, to be the "coldest peace" possible. It is, less of a peace than a de facto state of non-belligerence. The Israeli ambassador in Cairo is isolated and blacklisted and does not participate in any official functions of the Egyptian government. There is practically no trade between the two countries and no cultural exchange. The public sector of Egypt, which constitutes 80% of the total economy is forbidden to do business with Israel. Private enterprises are actively discouraged and often threatened when they try to

The saving grace for Israel in its very cold peace with Egypt is that the Sinai is very large, and serves as a buffer zone. But in the Golan Heights, which the Syrians wish to have returned in exchange for "peace", and the "West Bank" and Gaza, which the Palestinians wish to have given to them as a "reward" for stopping the "intifada", there is no room at all for buffer zones. Although autonomy for the native Arab population is definitely an Israeli policy goal and a commitment under the Camp David Accords, the "West Bank" and Gaza and the Golan cannot possibly be surrendered to another sovereignty for any foreseeable future. It would make Israel totally indefensible. If the peace with Egypt is an example of what peace with Syria or with the Palestinians would look like, Israel's present government must be commended for proceeding with the greatest caution in the current negotiations and not to entrust its survival to empty promises. Only when the Arabs truly accept Israel as part of the Middle East should any further "land for peace" adjustments be considered.

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become engaged with Israeli firms. Israeli firms are barred from submitting tenders for local projects. For "security reasons" Israeli firms are not allowed to participate in trade fairs. Although quite a few Israelis visit Egypt, hardly any Egyptians go to Israel since those who do wish to visit are summoned to the security police for lengthy interrogation. **Not forthcoming on diplomatic front.** Many Israelis have been killed in Egypt or on the Egyptian border. The Egyptian media, including the official and semi-official press, are full of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish venom, preaching hatred and prejudice.

There have been numerous instances of "crazed" Egyptian soldiers shooting up

Israeli buses traveling along the border highways, to the general applause of the state-controlled media. On the diplomatic front, the Egyptians aren't any more forthcoming. Egypt spearheaded the campaign to keeping the "Zionism is racism" resolution in the U.N., contrary to U.S. wishes. Egypt exerts much effort to prevent African countries from establishing or renewing diplomatic relations with Israel. Egyptian diplomats, including Butros-Butros Ghali, now secretary general of the United Nations, lobbied fervently against the loan guarantees that Israel needed to absorb and to settle the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who have already arrived or will still arrive from the former Soviet Union.

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move out of self-disgust, but it's out of disgust, too. Pike's code—"When you side with a man, you stay with him"—applies to him and his men alone.

This anarchic integrity—this urge to make the universe come to terms—gets at the core attraction of Peckinpah's much-booted-about machismo and goes beyond the whoring and the physical bravado of each Bunch member. It also gets at the centrality of Mexico to Peckinpah's vision. Peckinpah was a Western individualist (his family is rooted in frontier California), and Pike is his reflection. Both men were drawn to Mexico. Richard Rodriguez, in *Days of Obligation: An Argument With My Mexican Father*, describes California as a comic culture, "constructed on a Protestant faith in individualism," where "youth is not a fruitless metaphor; where it is possible to start anew." Mexico, on the other hand, is a tragic culture: "My Mexican father, as his father before him, believed that old men know more than young men; that life will break your heart; that death finally is the vantage point from which a life must be seen."

IN *The Movie Rating Game* (1972) Stephen Farber, a Los Angeles-based critic, writes that when Pauline Kael spoke to the rating board, at Farber's invitation, in 1970, she asked a crucial question: in Farber's paraphrase, "By excluding young people from some of the most provocative and innovative contemporary films, aren't we depriving them of a good deal of the intellectual and imaginative stimulation that movies at their best can provide?"

In the current anxiety over movie violence we seem to be heading back to the days when moviegoing for teenagers meant Teflon fun. The cruelest irony is that many of the movies that could actually open kids' minds may prove vulnerable to censorship, because they take violent, attention-getting stories and fill them with character and feeling. I recently watched Henri-Georges Clouzot's great *The Wages of Fear*—an ancestor of Peckinpah's movie, about four men hauling nitroglycerin over bad roads for a big payoff—with a semi-delinquent adolescent friend, who afterward told me, solemnly, that the movie really taught him a lesson: "There are some things you shouldn't do for money." That's more than kids get from most movies. For their sake, *The Wild Bunch* should be freed. ☼



In Mozart's Shadow

*A reassessment of Haydn's
operas*

ON the subject of the forgotten operas of Franz Josef Haydn (1732–1809), no commentator can resist quoting the endorsement of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and Hungary. “If I wish to hear a good opera,” she is supposed to have said, “I go to Eszterháza”—that being the

by **Matthew Gurewitsch**

“Hungarian Versailles” of Haydn’s stagestruck employer, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, who would not have thought the estate worth building without a private opera house.

The lady’s desire cannot have been that keen. She paid one visit to the Prince’s inconvenient retreat in the summer of 1773,

and she never paid another. Still, the imperial compliment sheds its tantalizing glow. The opera that Maria Theresa attended was *L’Infedeltà delusa* (*Infidelity Outwitted*), the earliest of the eight operas of Haydn’s Eszterháza period that have come down to us in their entirety. (Parts of others have been lost.)

What besides a Haydn opera might one have seen during an evening with the Prince? Many fashionable novelties. Beginning with the inauguration of the opera house, in 1768, Haydn, resident kapellmeister as well as court composer, put on some one hundred operas by a roll call of the admired composers of the day: Salieri, Cimarosa, Anfossi, Traetta, Grétry, Gassmann, Martín y Soler, and many more, few of whom escaped Haydn’s editorial pen. Ten of the full-scale operas mounted, plus a number of the puppet operas seen at the palace, were Haydn’s own, and several of these went on to ample success elsewhere.

From our vantage point, a production at Eszterháza looks to have been a guarantee of impending oblivion. This truth applies to Haydn no less than to Salieri and the rest. To us the polemicist and reformer Christoph Gluck looms as the towering musical dramatist of that age; his *Orfeo ed Euridice* has held its own on the world’s stages right down to the present. Scholars, as it happens, cannot say for sure whether Gluck was ever performed at Eszterháza or not. Perhaps prophetically, Mozart was not. Plans for *Le nozze di Figaro*, which had its premiere in Vienna in 1786, collapsed with the death of the Prince, in 1790, and the subsequent disbanding of the opera company.

Posterity has lost the measure of Haydn. He was no titan, perhaps. His sense of decorum and proportion ran too deep for that; storming heaven was for the firebrands of a later age. Yet the oratorio *The Creation* and the last symphonies attain the sublime as surely as do Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Bruckner, and Mahler, not to mention the demonic Mozart of *Don Giovanni*. Amid the fellowship of professionals Haydn has always stood on even footing with the highest, revered both for his symphonies (more than a hundred, among them separate sets written to win the applause of

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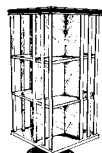
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Paris and London, where tastes were by no means alike) and for his solo and chamber music (nearly fifty piano sonatas, nearly seventy string quartets, and much, much more).

Consider the esteem in which Haydn was held by Mozart, his junior by nearly a quarter century. Mozart's respect for most other composers was nearly nonexistent; yet the younger man became Haydn's devoted friend and acknowledged him as a master, paying him homage in six quartets (popularly known as Mozart's *Haydn Quartets*) on which he lavished all his musical science and invention.

Could an artist as skilled, adaptable, and experienced as Haydn labor for two decades and more in a genre to which he had nothing lasting to contribute? It seems impossible. The twentieth century has reclaimed Handel's operas for the stage, along with plenty of Mozart that long lay forgotten (*Idomeneo*, *La clemenza di Tito*, even *Così fan tutte*), not to mention masterpieces of Verdi for which his own century had little use (*La forza del destino*, *Les vêpres siciliennes*, *Don Carlos*). Surely Haydn's operatic merits could not be lost on tastes as broad as ours.

You would not think so. Still, in the 1970s, when the Hungarian-born conductor Antal Dorati, the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, and a distinguished roster of soloists including Elly Ameling, Frederica von Stade, Norma Lerer, Lucia Valentini-Terrani, Luigi Alva, and Samuel Ramey recorded the eight surviving operas, nothing happened—or nothing much. There were scattered favorable reviews—well deserved, because the readings of these unfamiliar texts were thoughtful, crisp, and vivid. In some quarters there were the predictable calls for performances on period instruments. But there were none of the landmark stage productions that light the way to a broad renaissance. Eventually a few rival recordings appeared, none to much notice. The LPs soon went out of print, and the material remained unavailable until last summer, when Philips Classics finally reissued the whole set on compact disk.

THE series originally began with *La fedeltà premiata* (*Fidelity Rewarded*), *La vera costanza* (*True Constancy*), and *Orlando paladino* (*Orlando the Paladin*), respectively the sixth, fourth, and seventh of the surviving operas. A feature

common to them all, and the one that left listeners amazed, is the panoramic end-of-act finale: a spectacular musical creation involving most or all of the characters in a kaleidoscopic dazzlement of mood and incident, studded with gorgeously varied melodies, the whole set into a framework of rich harmonic sophistication. (For the sake of those finales, two in each opera, listeners were inclined to wink at the flimsy third acts, which rattle halfheartedly to foregone conclusions and wrap up with forgettable little free-for-alls.)

The inevitable comparison was with Mozart, specifically the second-act finale of *Le nozze di Figaro*. A twenty-minute masterpiece within a masterpiece, of all operatic finales the most analyzed and revered, it stands in opera lovers' minds as the paradigm of Mozart's revolutionary dramaturgy in music. And here was Haydn, performing miracle after miracle of the same order a half decade or more before Mozart thought to try.

As the remaining five operas appeared on record in the late 1970s, out of sequence and at long intervals, disappointment set in. The initial revelation of the finales had set up high expectations in the wrong terms, as if each of the Haydn operas were a way station toward the ideal of the second-act finale from *Figaro*. By that criterion the subsequent entries fell short. Haydn's finales in other operas, where they exist at all, work on a markedly less ambitious scale. Exquisitely crafted arias, tellingly embellished with deft instrumental touches, compensate to a degree but not enough. As operas in the post-Mozartian sense of the word—integrated drama, that is, in which music is the soul and heartbeat—Haydn's spotty pieces seemed, to disappointed listeners, scarcely to exist. The comedies were not funny, and the tragedies were, sort of. The initial prospect of a treasure house heaped high with marvels eventually gave way to ennui.

Surveying the operas in order of composition, as last year's reissue prompted this devotee of Haydn and of opera to do, not only does Haydn greater justice but also yields greater enjoyment. Uncompromised by Mozartian prejudice, *L'infedeltà delusa* (1773) makes a most favorable impression.

The characters are drawn with wit, sympathy, and affection; but the score

finds room, too, for stormy outbreaks of hurt and rage. Handed the opportunity, Haydn proved, moreover, that he knew how to please a crowd. To win her love (and to help her brother win his), Ves-pina, the poor but resourceful heroine, impersonates four imaginary characters: a garrulous old woman, a German servingman with fractured Italian, a haughty marquis, and a bustling notary. Two of her arias (her role features no fewer than four) are sung in disguise, each in its own distinctive "voice." Audiences love such vocal charades.

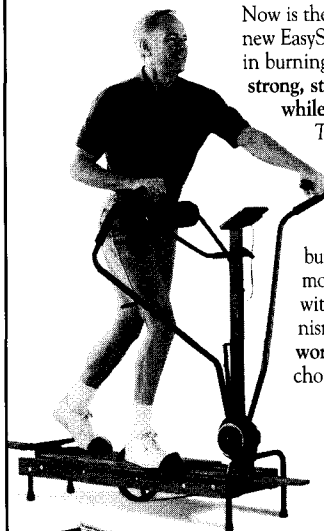
L'incontro improvviso (*The Chance Encounter*, 1775) founders on its libretto, which Haydn, according to habit, accepted as he found it. (Mozart and Verdi were never so docile.) The tale treats the well-worn theme of an abduction from a seraglio. The overture, brisk and spicy in the so-called Turkish style, raises pleasurable hopes, but the curtain rises on action that starts at a standstill and never moves on. If an opera could be judged on excerpts alone, this one would make a strong showing, especially for the extraordinary trio for three sopranos, spun from the same ether as the Letter Duet of *Le nozze di Figaro*. But in context, displayed to no advantage, even the gems lose their luster. At the close of day two of the Eszterháza cycle, the road ahead—six more operas!—looks stony.

WITH *Il mondo della luna* (*The World of the Moon*, 1777) we turn a corner. The cast consists of the well-to-do Buonafede, his two marriageable daughters (one of equable temperament, the other touched with tragic fire), their serving girl, and three unrelated menfolk of varying social standing. A triple wedding is in the cards. The only question is by what route the lovers will get there, and the answer is by way of the moon—not the real moon, but the moon as stage-managed for the old man by the charlatan astronomer Ecclitico.

Once again, the score is lovingly crafted: a passing minor-key swoon at the close of a tranquil love song otherwise in the major makes the heart skip a beat; pictorial touches in the orchestra (a Haydn specialty) evoke curiosities—smelling salts, for example, wafting like a gray and evil fog. But the genius of the opera lies elsewhere. Against ticktocking music that mimics the mechanics of Ecclitico's

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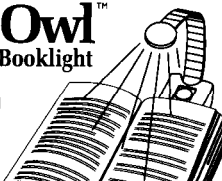


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strategem, Haydn sets dreamy strains that evoke the illusion in Buonafede's mind. The command of atmosphere, uniquely layered and tinted to the requirements of this one plot, shows the hand of a wizard. Irradiated by Haydn's moon, one approaches each of the following operas as a special case: a little world governed by laws of its own.

In *La vera costanza* (1779) Haydn turns his mind from atmosphere to action—external events, among them the opening storm at sea, but also the inner movements of the characters' souls. The story is one of those painful, highly artificial affairs, found also in Shakespeare and Mozart (to search no further), in which the constancy of a blameless woman is put to cruel and gratuitous tests by a man who outranks her in the social order. Despite the artifice the emotions blaze with heroic truth.

L'isola disabitata (*The Desert Island*, 1779), in contrast, finds Haydn obsessed with the unities—the classic unities of time, place, and action, and also of tone, for the four players are without exception of sterling character, noble, true of heart, and unhappy only to the degree that they are the innocent victims of misfortune. Unlike lesser operatic souls, they never descend to *recitativo secco*—opera's "dry" equivalent of ordinary conversational talk, underscored only by the continuo, a performing unit made up of harpsichord, cello, and double bass. No, for the Island Four, all "speech" is couched in *recitativo accompagnato*—recitative accompanied by the full expression of the orchestra, a device that the classic period normally reserved for isolated passages of rare emotional gravity. Throughout, the orchestra is the soloists' full partner. In the splendid final quartet the solo violin, cello, flute, and bassoon rejoice with two pairs of lovers, one long lost, one newfound. Of the frost that tends to hang on works of such deliberate perfection, this mellow beauty shows not one crystal.

La fedeltà premiata (1781) may at first seem like a return to the mold of *La vera costanza*, which had been produced only two years before. In form and matter no two of the Eszterháza operas are more alike, yet in governing spirit they resemble each other not at all. *La vera costanza* appeals to a listener's sincerity; within applicable conventions it presents its world and its people as real. *La fedeltà*

premiata, in contrast, is frankly a fable, to be relished at a knowing remove.

Action, which had the composer's full attention in the earlier opera, now detains him hardly at all. The scant music cues for a climactic hunt add up to a gaping hole. Haydn refuses to be distracted from his principal business: the analysis of emotional masquerade. His characters are frauds, flirts, and liars; the noblest of them is forced, for the least selfish of reasons, to deny the love in her heart. Both vocal lines and instrumental interjections point up poses and tell tales of slips we would now call Freudian. Haydn's psychology, in a gallery of personalities wider than he had previously attempted, is sharper and more sustained than ever before.

IN the last two Eszterháza operas—*Orlando paladino* (1782) and *Armida* (1784)—psychology is at best an intermittent concern. The libretti derive, by way of innumerable adaptations, from the epics of Ariosto and Tasso: tapestries of love, war, and madness interwoven with glittering threads of enchantment. The original Renaissance readers and today's academics call the stories deep moral allegories, but for all the high eloquence of the verse, the Christians and Saracens clash like cowboys and Indians. Perhaps the poets' most disarming legacy is on the puppet stages of Sicily, where to this day the Crusades rage on.

Orlando paladino partakes of the full diversity of traditions, mixing styles high and low with an ease worthy of the Mozart of *The Magic Flute*. Alcina the witch holds the ear spellbound with her skipping jubilation; the comic Pasquale (elder brother to *Don Giovanni*'s Leporello) clinches a romance with his unexpected virtuosity on the fiddle; Charon, melodious ferryman of the dead, wards off the living from the underworld. The common sense of squire and shepherdess often casts upon the manias of *Orlando*'s noblefolk a knowing light of farce, but not always. *Orlando*'s madness is authentically haunting, and the travails of Princess Angelica, beset by a violent and unwelcome suitor, inspire airs that touch the heart.

The role of Angelica is sung by the California-born soprano Arleen Auger. This recording was her first to cross my phonograph. There were many, many more in the years following, along with concert performances to cherish for a

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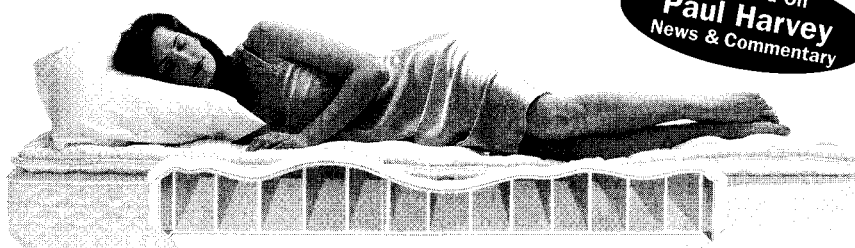
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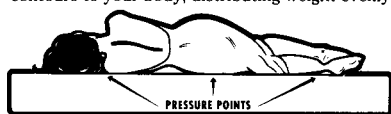
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lifetime. The world would come to know her when, as poised and blithe as a skylark, she sang Mozart at the wedding of Prince Andrew and the Duchess of York. That marriage has shipwrecked, and the singer is gone, struck down by cancer. She was blessed with a musicality as natural as it was artful, and if just one singer may gather the collective garlands for the many imaginative performances not only in *Orlando* but throughout the series, the honor should perhaps be hers.

Or maybe it should be Jessye Norman's, for her pathos as Armida, undone by her love for the crusader whom hell has sent her to seduce. Not that the opera to which the enchantress lends her name has the appeal of *Orlando paladino*. For two acts the focus is on Rinaldo, the deserter, flip-flopping between the demands of love and duty. Brilliant arias here and there cannot rescue his vacillations from tedium. Haydn's heart was not in it.

Ah, but Act Three! In a magic wood the knight makes to strike the myrtle tree dear to his forsaken beloved. The trunk opens and there she stands, pleading in the name of their former love and then hurling defiance in cries that flash with the smoky fires of the abyss. The entire scene (a long one) alternates arias with *recitativo accompagnato* of staggering potency. In the presence of such writing the notion of Tasso's fantastic tales as vehicles of moral investigation rings true; the music Rinaldo hears in the forest is music for sifting one's destiny. Opera does not get any better.

So is it time for a Haydn renaissance? *L'infedeltà delusa* might give a bright young star like Ruth Ann Swenson, with her flair for comedy, a special chance to shine. A graceful ensemble such as the one Mark Lamos brings into being each summer at Glimmerglass Opera, outside Cooperstown, New York, might lift off for the empyrean with *Il mondo della luna*. A company capable of casting a first-rate *Don Giovanni* could hardly do better than to mount *Orlando paladino* as an encore. And if a connoisseurs' festival with a small house at its disposal surrounded the lustrous Cecilia Bartoli with such colleagues as Sylvia McNair, Frank Lopardo, and Wolfgang Holzmair, *L'isola disabitata* could be quietly transporting. In the theater Haydn's best hope probably lies in the isolated and perfect revival. On disc, in proper sequence, the Eszterháza cycle exerts a rare fascination. ☼



2034

An Orwellian look at a future society based on a truly dangerous idea — equal opportunity

by Nicholas Lemann

THE RISE OF THE MERITOCRACY

by Michael Young.
Transaction Publishers,
180 pages, \$18.95.

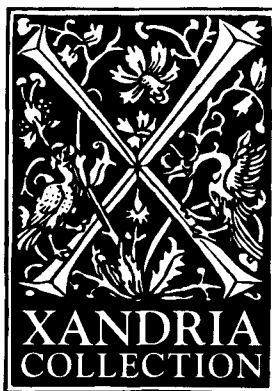
THE category to which *The Rise of the Meritocracy* belongs might be called soc-sci-fi: dystopian fantasies about future forms of human organization. For some reason the examples of the genre that spring to mind are all products of mid-twentieth-century Britain. *Brave New World* came out in 1932, *1984* in 1949, and *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, pretty much the last in the line, in 1958. The first of these is set five cen-

turies hence; the second is something of a period piece now, because of the fall of communism; but *The Rise of the Meritocracy* has the thrill of immediate relevance, which must be why an American academic publisher is reissuing it.

In 1958 Michael Young was a leading British sociologist and a theoretician for the Labour Party. *The Rise of the Meritocracy* takes the form of a report written in the year 2034 by "Michael Young," a leading British sociologist—a confusing setup, because "Michael Young" is pompous and arrogant and disagrees with most of what seem to be Michael Young's views. The story that "Michael Young" tells begins with the reform of the civil service in the 1870s and picks up its mo-

mentum in 1944, when Britain, the major power that clung longest to the vestiges of feudalism, finally enacted into law the principle that the government should provide all children with a secondary education. But financial constraints and the British elite's conviction that most people were ineducable past the point of basic literacy led to the creation of a system with a brutal cutoff point.

Under the then enormous influence of Cyril Burt, one of the pioneers in the field of mental measurement, Britain created the "11-plus" exam, which had an IQ section and was given to all students upon completion of elementary school. The highest-scoring 20 percent went on to state-run "grammar schools" that



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pointed them toward a university education; the mass went to "technical schools," or "secondary moderns," where they got a vocational education that ended when they were fifteen. It has to be kept in mind that the founders of this system thought of it as a great liberalizing step. Previously the boarding-school-educated children of the upper class got most of the slots in higher education, which gave them a lock on the top positions in government, finance, and the professions. Now, theoretically, anybody who was bright could get to the top.

Michael Young took the 1944-1958 trend line and extended it outward, at the same slope, by three quarters of a century. Where it led is to a "meritocracy"—the *Oxford English Dictionary* has Young as the first user of the word—based on IQ. All inheritance of money and position have been abolished. So have seniority systems. The class structure has been reshuffled, because the smart have been gathered up from all groups and deposited at the top, and the dumb left at, or sent to, the bottom. Everyone makes the same salary (called the Equal), but members of the higher orders are given enough perquisites that their standard of living is far superior. Although everyone's IQ is routinely tested every five years, people sharply dissatisfied with their lot can petition the government bureaucracy (run out of a headquarters called Eugenics House) for additional retests, which, they hope, will lead to class reassignment.

But on the whole, at least as "Michael Young" sees it, the system doesn't make many mistakes and most people accept it. Now that there are no longer any talented members of the working class, the Labour Party has withered. It limps along under the name Technicians Party (because workers are now called technicians), and what feeble protests there are against the meritocracy are mounted by the wild-eyed Populists. The House of Commons has also become unimportant, because once the House of Lords was reorganized on meritocratic principles, with membership by appointment rather than inheritance, it came to dominate British political life completely. (As if to confirm at least part of that prediction, the author of *The Rise of the Meritocracy* is today Lord Young of Dartington, a life peer and a Labour member of the upper chamber.)

The Rise of the Meritocracy is a little light on enlivening details, and it has no real characters except "Michael Young," who ends the book confidently predicting that there can be no effective rebellion against the meritocracy and then, we are informed in a footnote, is killed in one. But its thinking is consistently rich and fascinating—Young is on to a big theme, involving fundamental questions about social organization and individual dignity. What drives the book is Young's having identified one of the fundamental paradoxes of what we would call liberalism and the British would call socialism: the liberal dream of equal opportunity, if realized, could produce a society that would be a liberal's nightmare, in which inequality substantially increased. Not only that: members of the upper class would begin to think of themselves as, so to speak, the deserving rich, and so would be even more insufferably self-righteous than their merely lucky predecessors had been, because their superiority had been scientifically demonstrated. The left would have no rhetoric, no set of principles, with which to combat the material and psychological depredations of inequality.

The idea of meritocracy, if not the precise word, has always entranced the liberal mind: Jefferson wanted this country to be run by a "natural aristocracy," and Shaw dreamed of a "democratic aristocracy" in Britain. The view expressed in *The Rise of the Meritocracy* is that before the Second World War the idea could not be put into effect—it was technologically impracticable—and therefore it did much more good than harm. Liberals could use the notion of equal opportunity to promote causes like civil rights and universal education without having to suffer the 2034-era consequences. But after the war, with accurate, mass-administrable mental tests available and a strong consensus in favor of expanding education, it became theoretically possible for the first time in history to create a society in which everyone reached the level of his or her ability. The result is the society described by "Michael Young": another example of how dangerous it can be for a dream to come true.

WE'RE now about halfway between the date when *The Rise of the Meritocracy* was written and the date of the situation it focuses on. How accurate is Young's vision turning out to be?

There was one big, obvious development that Young failed to predict—that the British educational system he was writing about would crumble within a decade of the publication of *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. Young posited a political opposition that in the short run would fail owing to the cooptation of its potential leaders into the meritocracy—hence the armed rebellion of 2034. In fact the political opposition, when it did arise, almost exactly on Young's schedule, was successful. During the Labour ascendancy of the 1960s and 1970s, the 11-plus exam was abolished almost everywhere in Britain, and the grammar schools and secondary moderns were replaced by "comprehensive schools" for everyone. Today bringing back the 11-plus and the grammar school is a minor conservative cause. (Young correctly saw that meritocracy, prospectively a liberal cause, would become a conservative one as soon as it was in operation.) A revolution against the British meritocracy—the meritocracy in its harsh 1950s form, anyway—is unimaginable, because it's unnecessary.

Young was right, though, about the overall social transformation that was taking place. Because of the increasing importance of knowledge in advanced societies, education took on the function of personnel sorter, or social stratifier, in the second half of the twentieth century. As Young predicted, businesses and other employers, rather than ignoring educational credentials, embraced them in their own systems for classifying and routing people. All this was a signal change that remade the composition of elites and (since the tournament was now theoretically open to all entrants) the aspirations and attitudes of everyone else.

Young's picture of a meritocratic upper class that attains a level of self-righteousness higher than that of its predecessor upper classes, and a completely dispirited working class, seems only debatably accurate today; the meritocratic upper class probably has a greater stated (if paper-thin) commitment to egalitarian principles than did the industrial upper class, for example. Some of Young's tossed-off observations were more prophetic. He saw, five years before the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, that as college became less a finishing school and more a socioeconomic launching station, women gradu-

ates would begin to find housewifery insulting and to pursue careers, while hiring the less educated to do their families' babysitting and housework. He also had a left-wing group issuing a manifesto in 2009 that calls on schools to promote "diversity": Young realized that the more education matters, the more ferociously will be debated the questions of who gets into which school and what the standards of judgment are.

If you were looking for a present-day society that has traveled further down the road to the triumph of the meritocracy than Britain, you might consider the United States. By the lights of the book, this would be a shocking development. "Michael Young" treats America with a typically British combination of ignorance and condescension. Because the United States is a multi-ethnic society, he says, it has to use its schools "to wrest nationhood from polyglot chaos." Therefore they are "institutions not for education but for social leveling." America will always have public schools that admit everyone, so it can't produce a meritocratic elite.

Actually, the United States wound up achieving the goals of meritocracy hawks like "Michael Young" through much less naked means than were used in Britain, and so its achievements were much less vulnerable to being dismantled than the 11-plus-grammar school system was. "Michael Young" refers dismissively to a populist educator in America called "Professor Conant," who "was an American Professor apparently well known at the time." This is James Bryant Conant, who had been the president of Harvard and the high commissioner to Germany; the Big Daddy of the American meritocracy, he was in reality anything but a social leveler. What the education establishment introduced in this country was mass testing of "scholastic aptitude," rather than IQ explicitly, and tracking within comprehensive schools, rather than separate public school systems for the high- and low-scoring. American elite higher education adopted artfully blurred selection procedures that have served to let in most of the meritocrats thus produced while granting special favors to people like aristocrats and minorities, and thereby defusing at least some of their natural enmity toward the system. Although American conservatives consider our meritocracy to

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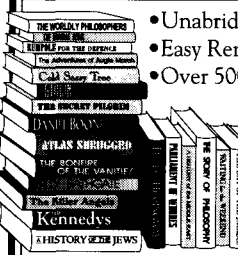
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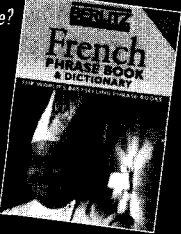
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be constantly under attack, the principles for which "Michael Young" stands are on firmer footing on this side of the Atlantic than the other.

TO the extent that *The Rise of the Meritocracy* is out-of-date, it's because of flaws not in what mental testers would call its predictive validity but in its underlying assumptions. These are, first, that IQ tests measure an important human quality that could never before be accurately gauged. Second, this quality, "intelligence," is the crucial variable in society: *The Rise of the Meritocracy* defines it, with jarring simplicity, as "the ability to raise production." Third, advanced nations, realizing that leadership by the intelligent is a prerequisite of successful competition in the international economy, will see no choice but to submit to ruthless IQ sorting of their citizenries. And fourth, doing this will have an immense economic payoff: as "Michael Young" proudly reports from 2034, "Thanks mainly to the scientific management of talent, in productivity little Britain began to leave the giants behind."

Let's take these one by one.

There was always a logical glitch in the IQ testers' position: if IQ is a measurement of general mental ability, then wouldn't people with high IQs have tended to rise to the top of societies even before IQ was identified and the tests for it developed? (Otherwise IQ is merely self-validating: if people with high IQs are the most successful, it's only because they were put on a track to success when they got high IQ scores.) So wouldn't all societies have been at least partly meritocratic, rather than meritocracy's having become possible only after the Second World War? The postwar testers, in other words, tended to take the exaggerated position that no ability sorting whatsoever could have taken place before they arrived on the scene, and so overstated the magnitude of their accomplishment. "The world beholds for the first time the spectacle of a brilliant class," "Michael Young" states triumphantly in *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. What about the classes that ran Athens in 440 B.C., Florence in 1500, and the United States in 1790?

If before there was IQ testing merit was rewarded, at least to some extent and under certain circumstances (for example, in newer and more open societies),

then the social order that mass IQ testing ushered in would be described more accurately as IQ-ocracy, or education-ocracy, than as meritocracy. Other than psychometricians, who keep quiet about it, few people still believe totally in IQ as "the general factor," as British mental testers used to call it. Instead IQ looks more like a narrow mental dexterity, a kind of cleverness, that correlates with good grades in school but can't be confidently and provably called "the ability to raise production." It's very hard to imagine any country now embracing an 11-plus-like system, and to the extent that some countries are IQ-sorted anyway, the high-IQ elite seems less unquestionably superhuman than *The Rise of the Meritocracy* predicted it would be.

Knowing, though, that test results and educational credentials are important in determining the course of life, people put much more effort into trying to beat the system than *The Rise of the Meritocracy* supposed. Young mentioned in passing "I.Q.-crammers" as a rogue group who were quickly disposed of; the real-life American equivalent, the test-prep industry, is big, established, and growing. The idea of actively trying to obtain the most favorable possible outcomes from tests and admissions offices, rather than passively accepting their judgments, is part of the fabric of upper-middle-class life. So is the idea of investing heavily in tuition. It's the better-off and more sophisticated people who can make these efforts on behalf of their children, which means that status in a meritocracy can be transmitted between generations to a greater extent than Young foresaw. Theorists of meritocracy, including Young, have long perceived that the system could develop aristocratic tendencies, but they have thought the mechanism would be "assortive mating"—high-IQ men and women meeting on elite campuses, marrying, and producing high-IQ children purely through genetics. No doubt this does go on, but the prosperous also have at hand social means of improving the odds for their offspring.

Finally, the dramatic productivity increases that *The Rise of the Meritocracy* predicted so confidently haven't materialized: in this country, just at the time when the meritocratic apparatus was becoming mature, about twenty years ago, productivity growth stalled. Occasional-

Why America Needs an Immigration Moratorium

From amidst the cacophony of discordant immigration proposals, one hears the emergence of some simple truths. First we now know that immigration is costing somebody, or some people, a lot of money. Whether its hundreds of millions or billions (the studies never seem to agree), it's clear that immigration is not a self-financing proposition. State taxpayers in California, Florida, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia and Texas are demanding action.

Second, it's clear that immigration is now a political issue of some potency. Polls indicated that most Americans generally oppose immigration, if for no other reason than they think immigration is needless. Some is OK, they say, but only as long as there are no noticeable ill effects.

But all that changed in the face of Haitian boats, the World Trade Center bombing, Chinese boats, international immigrant-smuggling and crime syndicates, persistent illegal immigration from Mexico, and high profile tales of immigrant-related welfare rip-offs.

Now a public consensus has emerged: Let's hold off on more immigration. If immigration is costing money and creating other problems, why not just give the country a break from immigration for a while?

So far, the political leadership in this country has failed to grasp this whole analysis. Most Democrats and Republicans have suggested either beefing up the Border Patrol or cutting benefits for illegal immigrants. Within these two broad strategies is an array of often inconsistent ideas to "defuse immigrant bashing," as it's often called.

The administration's "border enhancement plan," for example, includes measures to accelerate naturalization ceremonies. This noble-sounding initiative to create more citizens will actually produce longer backlogs for waiting relatives (now at 4 million) and only increase future pressures for illegal immigration.

Eventually political leaders will have to face facts: Immigration is costing money. Rather than cut off welfare to immigrants, or rubber-stamp more applications, Congress and the president need to think about cutting the number of immigrants. That's really what the public wants. And it is probably only a matter of time before most politicians figure this out.

Unfortunately, the current laws take us in exactly the wrong direction, actually causing immigration levels to increase.

Based on current projections of temporary and permanent immigration, new labor market entrants are likely to exceed available jobs by more than 8 million in the next 10 years. This cannot be allowed to happen. We need a pause in immigration for a while.

Don't get me wrong. To reduce immigration, or provide a moratorium or time-out, is not to suggest that many immigrants do not become hard working, model citizens. It simply means that the country needs a break to absorb and handle its critical social and internal problems, and clean up its affairs to face the 21st century. It needs to strengthen its national institutions, civilization and culture to withstand the future stresses and strains likely to emerge later this decade.

We've had such immigration breaks in the past. In the early 19th century, and for a good part of the 20th, we've enjoyed sustained periods of very low immigration. And the truth is, sustained pauses have been good for the country and especially good for recent immigrants.

A few in Congress have figured this out. Despite feeling that it would be wonderful to take anyone who wants to come here, they are facing the sad truth that we need to limit immigration significantly to preserve the nation.

But, for the most part, the discordant noise of a bewildered and perplexed national leadership is still drowning out the tough truths needed for a brighter future. While the immigration issue is now firmly on the national radar screen, we may be years away from serious reform. How long can we wait?

by Dan Stein, Executive Director



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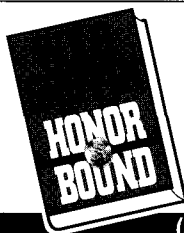
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ly a journal article by a psychometrician will appear claiming that the reason for this is that we *underuse* IQ tests. There are other possible explanations. One is that IQ is not especially well correlated with the ability to generate economic activity, and another is that the meritocracy doesn't do a good job of deploying its human resources. The people who planned the British and American meritocracies believed that the high-IQ youths they were finding in every nook and cranny of the social structure and bringing to the best universities would mostly become scientists, or scientist-managers, or scientist-statesmen—which is what Michael Young and James Bryant Conant themselves were. "It is scientists who have inherited the earth," reports *The Rise of the Meritocracy*; who else could master "the full and ever-growing complexity of our technical civilization"?

What actually happened was that Oxford and Harvard, which under the pre-meritocratic regime provided privileged youths with what "Michael Young" dismissively calls "expensive training for Bar, counting-house, or surgery," under the new regime have provided somewhat smarter and less privileged youths with exactly the same thing. Graduates of elite American universities overwhelmingly enter the professions—so overwhelmingly that the immediate past president of Harvard, Derek Bok, has just written a book complaining about it. The reason is that law, investment banking, and medicine have such favorable risk-to-reward ratios: the greater the tendency for elite university students to come from families that are not rich, the more important it will be to them to find high-paying careers. So the polite old custom that universities were for gentlemen who ought not to get involved with business or technology has actually been strengthened by the opening of universities to nongentlemen (because at the same time that they were being admitted, pay in the professions was zooming upward). Even if we accept the premise that meritocrats have it in them to raise the whole society's productivity, they aren't best situated to do so if they're doctors and lawyers.

ALTHOUGH *The Rise of the Meritocracy's* message about the perils of equal opportunity has both moral weight and intellectual elegance, it is not

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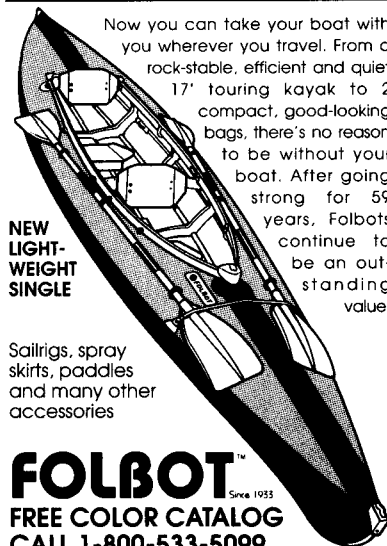
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unassailable, in light of the way the system has turned out. Imagine proceeding from this set of assumptions, instead of Young's: There is no unitary measurable human quality that can be described as general ability. Therefore, even if all the people who score high on IQ tests are grouped together and given the best possible training, they won't represent all the talent in a society and aren't assured of doing well by virtue of their innate superiority. So providing opportunity to every individual will not necessarily lead to a society in which the more and the less able are hyper-segregated. The true result of equal opportunity would be that people would naturally rise and fall throughout their careers depending on the ever-shifting match between their abilities and level of motivation and the circumstances in which they found themselves. Sure, some would always be on top and some always on the bottom, but not nearly so many as is envisioned in *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. You have to believe in IQ as all-powerful—to believe, that is, that “merit” is a static and largely inborn quality—to worry that opportunity must inevitably lead to profound inequality. Otherwise opportunity looks much less threatening.

However, enough of the formal structure of meritocracy is in place by now that the educational system is the de facto provider of individual opportunity in America. To some extent it fulfills the role, foreseen by Young, of harsh but just identifier and nurturer of talent. In addition, education is a valuable credential that can be bought even by the non-meritorious and that is not available to everyone. Education has become the main transmission device for status in society, in the way that land ownership once was.

So if we aren't quite so sure anymore that education equals merit, we know quite well that education equals opportunity. Among thirty-year-old males, for example, the “earnings gap” between college graduates and high school graduates was 25 to 30 percent in the 1960s. In the 1970s, as the tremendous expansion of higher education began to create a glut of graduates, the gap dropped to 15 percent. But today it is around 50 percent—and people who don't have a high school diploma can just forget about it, as far as social mobility is concerned.

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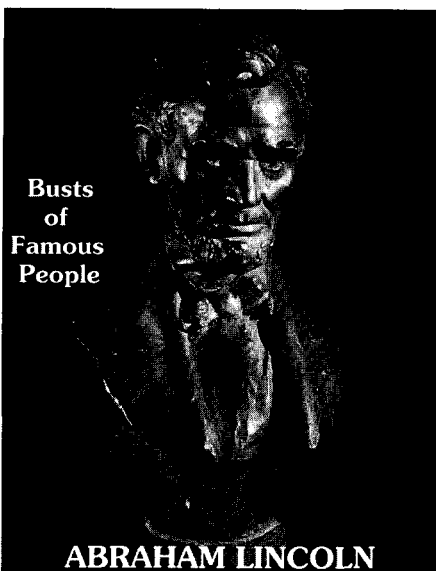
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As Young saw, the great advantage of opportunity as a cause is that it is politically popular—much more so than equality as a cause, and much more so here than in Britain. Can there be any doubt that opportunity rhetoric ("investing in people"; "we do not have a single person to waste") took Bill Clinton to the White House? Young's point that a good society owes each individual honor regardless of his or her quotient of merit is well taken. Doesn't society also owe everyone the removal of structural impediments to

the acting out of ambitions (which, these days, would mean undertaking two contradictory-seeming reforms: making a good education universally available, and creating more avenues for people who don't have educational credentials)? Isn't the danger that doing so will result in the formation of a distinct, despised, low-on-merit class much less than Young believed? Admiring *The Rise of the Meritocracy* ought not necessarily to entail accepting its notion that opportunity is the tar baby of liberalism. ☼

BRIEF REVIEWS



My Own Country

by Abraham Verghese.
Simon & Schuster,
416 pages, \$22.50.

Dr. Verghese was born in Ethiopia of Indian parents and educated in Ethiopia and India; he arrived in the United States (not for the first time) as a qualified doctor in 1980. His interest lay in internal medicine and infectious diseases. By 1985 he had found a post at East Tennessee State University which involved working at a Veterans Administration hospital and the nearby Johnson City Medical Center. He also had a grant for private research on "peevish" hamsters. He had enough, in short, to keep an industrious doctor well occupied. Shortly before his arrival, however, Johnson City had encountered its first AIDS case and had gone into what can fairly be named a panic. Dr. Verghese had dealt with AIDS previously, and as the number of cases increased, he became responsible for treating them. His memoir describes individual patients and what he learned of their histories. It reports local reaction, which ranged from kindness and intelligence to terrified rejection—in some cases by medical colleagues. Because he could not cure the disease, Dr. Verghese concentrated on providing comfort and

encouragement and frequent visits, becoming, in effect, a family doctor in the (possibly idealized) nineteenth-century style. He came to view his patients as his people, following their nonmedical problems and weeping, privately, over their sufferings, which were often hideous in appearance as well as in effect. He had never foreseen such obsessive professional concern, nor had his Indian-born wife: "AIDS had become a mistress that took me away from home and that I could not introduce in conversation when I was at home." Dr. Verghese's book is remarkably informative both about AIDS as a disease and about its effect on the people, including those treating it, in the surrounding society. The memoir is also very well written, with a nice appreciation of human character and local setting.

The Endangered English Dictionary

by David Grambs. Norton,
288 pages, \$23.00.

Mr. Grambs has assembled "Bodacious Words Your Dictionary Forgot," words that do exist, and appear in somebody's dictionary. Frequently Latinate and polysyllabic, they are defined in an amusingly contrasting mundane style that arouses respect for Mr. Grambs's ingenuity.

"Xiph . . . the swordfish"—*"a soupçon of herbs in the xiph."* "Latrede . . . slow"—*"an infuriatingly latrede waiter."* "Premorse . . . having the end broken or bitten off"—*"my suspiciously premorse popsi-cle."* "Adoxography" means "good writing on a minor subject." There appears to be no comparably inclusive word for "blunderly disceptation by scribaceous clerisy," which is unfortunate. A term covering clumsy debate by pen-happy literati would be a handy weapon.

The Sixteen Pleasures

by Robert Hellenga. Soho,
332 pages, \$22.00.

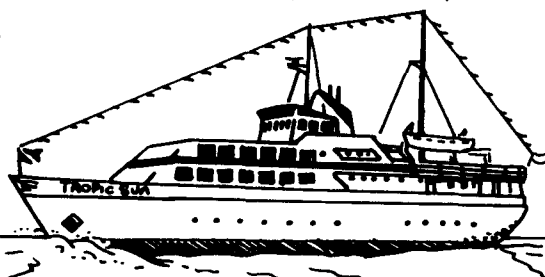
Mr. Hellenga's engaging novel concerns the adventures of an American woman, an accomplished restorer of old books, who, being at emotional loose ends and bored with her job, impulsively heads for Florence to volunteer her services in the wake of the flood that damaged books as well as buildings and paintings. She becomes involved with an Italian lover, a nunnery, and a fine bibliographic intrigue. The characters are convincing, the confusion and damage in the city are depicted with liveliness and plausibility, and the amount of suspense that Mr. Hellenga generates from the details of book and painting restoration is astounding. Who would expect to have cold chills and raised hackles over leather tooling?

Graveyard Working

by Gerald Duff. Baskerville,
185 pages, \$18.00.

A comic version of the southern Gothic genre may not be exactly reasonable, but Mr. Duff's novel is grotesquely amusing until its inappropriately bloody conclusion. The tale starts with two elderly sisters, widow and spinster, still delicately clawing each other over long-gone rivalries, and expands to include their younger relatives (one man garrulously impassioned about septic tanks, another trying ineptly to raise Christian guard dogs to supplement his preacher's salary), neighbors engaged in a slapstick hunting party, and eventually the whole district, converging for the annual cleanup of the cemetery. Old Sully, who is black, considers the lot of them daft, and he is right—but they do provide action and comedy if one is not too squeamish about the proprieties.

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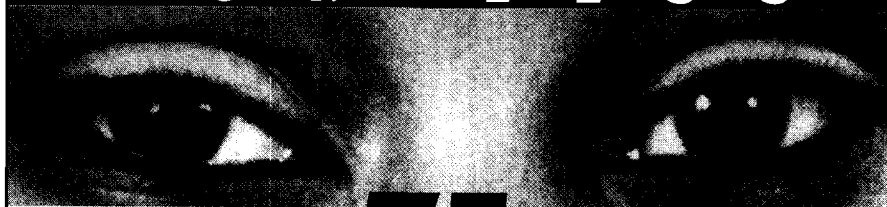
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Sanctuaries of the Goddess

by Peg Streep.

Little, Brown/Bulfinch Press,
224 pages, \$50.00/\$19.95.

Ms. Streep discusses the places, from cranky caves to Bronze Age Knossos, dedicated to the great goddess once worshipped across Europe. She does not pretend that it is possible to reconstruct rituals or do more than speculate, vaguely, on antique beliefs. The book's lack of maps and structural diagrams makes it difficult to grasp either the full shape of sanctuaries or the surrounding topography, but the illustrations, by various photographers, are handsome and impressive and may entice previously indifferent readers to look for further discussions of this remote faith. There is a bibliography to encourage research.

Once Upon a Time

by John Barth. Little, Brown,
408 pages, \$23.95.

What Mr. Barth has written is both a novel in the form of a memoir and a memoir in the form of a novel. The work leaps from one of these stools to the other and never rests easy on either of them, for the fiction demands no commitment and the fact commands no belief.

Edouard Vuillard

by Gloria Groom. Yale,
270 pages, \$60.00.

Ms. Groom presents a careful study of Vuillard's work as a "painter-decorator," work little known because much of it has drifted into unsuitable locations. Vuillard was connected with the fin de siècle Nabi group, painters who, with the support of some critics and over the objections of others, advocated a revival of coherent interior decoration designed to give a house "a pervading personality." Vuillard did handsome, tapestry-like paintings for that purpose for a number of patrons. What he, and his decorator colleagues, overlooked was the nature of the society in which they operated. Patrons got divorced and divided the paintings. They moved, and the paintings did not fit the walls of their new habitat. Some appear to have been simply careless with pieces that were quite delicate, for Vuillard sel-

dom used oil and canvas for his decorations. Ms. Groom has tracked down what remains of Vuillard's decorative work and describes its origins and history with pleasant authority. The illustrations are generous, but the large scale of the originals makes it impossible in most cases for a book-sized reproduction to convey more than a hint of the actual effect.

People Have More Fun Than Anybody

by James Thurber, edited by
Michael J. Rosen. Harcourt Brace,
192 pages, \$22.95.

The pieces and drawings assembled here have not been included in previous Thurber collections. It is hard to see why, for they are as funny, surprising, elegant, and subtly provocative as one would expect from that superb writer and draftsman. Happily, we have them now.

Oleander, Jacaranda

by Penelope Lively. HarperCollins,
133 pages, \$20.00.

Ms. Lively, born in 1933, spent her childhood in Egypt, where her father worked for a British bank and her mother did what the wives of such colonial representatives usually did—directed servants and entertained. Their daughter hardly knew either of them. She had no steady playmates and little contact with any visiting adults. Her only companion was Lucy, first a nanny and then a somewhat idiosyncratic governess. Ms. Lively's memoir of that isolated childhood is a balance, or perhaps a ricochet, between what she can actually remember and what history tells her was going on. There is seldom any correspondence between the two, and the book therefore becomes a frequently subtle exploration of the limits of juvenile perception.

Becoming Attached: Unfolding the Mystery of the Infant-Mother Bond and Its Impact on Later Life

by Robert Karen. Warner Books,
512 pages, \$24.95.

This book grew out of *The Atlantic's* cover story for February, 1990.

—by Phoebe-Lou Adams



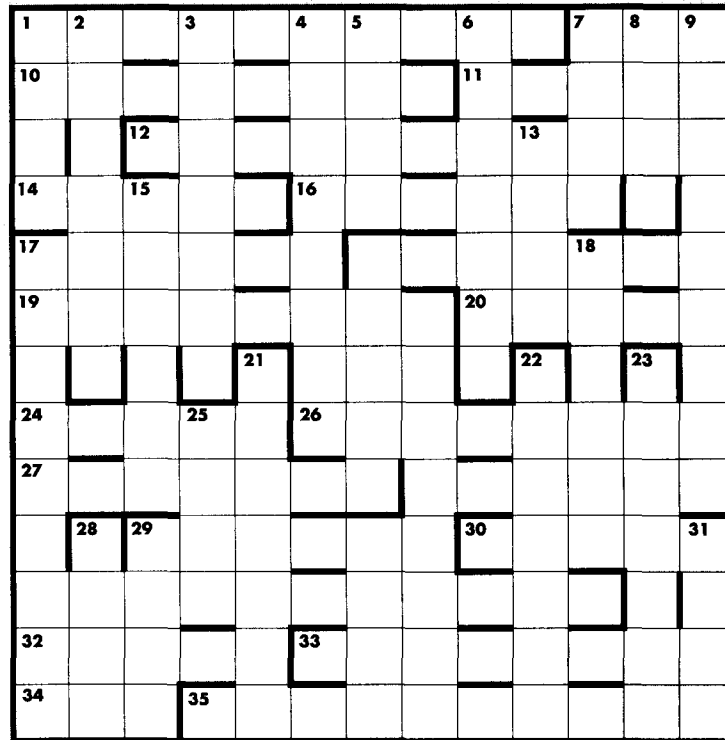
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Shakedown

The word **TRANSPOSE**, if shaken down—that is, anagrammed repeatedly with one letter deleted at each step—may form the following sequence: **TRANSPOSE**, **PROTEANS**, **SEAPORT**, **ORATES**, **ASTER**, **SEAT**, **TEA**, **AT**, **A**. This puzzle's unclued entries form a similar sequence of words shaken down from 11 letters to one. The 11-letter word may be thought to identify the steps. Entries in all include five proper nouns.

See page 134 for Puzzler contest details.
The solution to last month's Puzzler
appears on page 120.



Across

7. Fuss with a coif (3)
10. Structural change in Tacoma (8)
11. Walker Percy's first race novel (5)
12. Puzzling nature captivates American playwright (11)
14. Ill humor about British book (5)
16. A lot of water was first made leak-proof (6)
17. Vireo's tail breaks eggs (6)
19. Upon reflection, prophet possesses the same cures (8)
20. Leader of Congress interrupts real peace (5)
24. A swelling among the demagogues (5)
26. A pound gained after diet: that won't kill you (8)
27. "Lumpy" ran loud dances (7)
29. Somebody running off with part of steel operation (6)

30. Insect ingests nitrogen for a time (5)
32. Left a stud unfinished in porch (5)
33. Sweet drinks containing insubstantial eggs? (8)
34. Almost fix soda fountain (3)
35. Car engine's running rules? (10)

Down

1. European car's choking sound heard (4)
2. Composer going after ultimate greens (7)
3. Study Spanish article in a binder (7)
4. Operator calling in neglect of duty (7)
5. Heartless firearm makes you upset (4)
6. A fur's covering Eastern monkeys (7)
7. Provider of a trip for a Spanish hero (4)
8. Study end of Great Depression (4)
9. "It's a part of the body that's small or large," Leno cracked (9)
13. Spike, after film rating's back (4)
15. Crime group upset, and plot miserably failed (6)
18. Brown University involved in second New Testament article (6)
21. Clinton's beginning a story about alternative energy source (7)
22. Soon, one among hundreds will be orthodox (7)
23. Name involved in most of water power (7)
25. What's similar to a horse shoe (4)
28. Blow accomplices up (4)
29. Colony member at first exhausted when climbing mountain (4)
31. Unfavorably review the guy's debut of *Showboat* (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

WORD WATCH

by Anne H. Soukhanov

LUG *acronym, slang, lesbian* until graduation. Also called *four-year lesbian*. "The 'LUG' . . . phenomenon . . . has alienated many people—not only straight alumni but lesbians, who suggest that it trivializes their long and difficult journey" (*Newsweek*).

BACKGROUND: This citation represents but one view of the choices made by *LUGs*. Others in the gay community see the phenomenon more positively, as an instance of youthful experimentation with sexuality made possible by an atmosphere that tends to be tolerant and supportive of diversity. The acronym *LUG* is already exhibiting signs of becoming a noun and thereby acquiring staying power: it occasionally occurs in lowercase and has also appeared in the plural, especially in oral citations. Its easy and unambiguous pronunciation should also bolster its longevity.

smoodge or sploodge *noun, slang*, the extrusion of smoke and other particles from an underground target, indicating to the pilot of an attacking aircraft that the target has sustained a hit and been destroyed from within: "On instructions from intelligence targeteers, the F-117 pilots carried GBU-10s, which could be dropped from a higher altitude than GBU-27s but also lacked some of the penetrating punch. More than a dozen planes dropped two bombs each. When pilots later looked at their gun camera videotapes, they saw tremendous explosions but no 'smoodge'" (Rick Atkinson, *Crusade*, 1993).

BACKGROUND: The etymology of pilots' slang is notoriously difficult to trace, because much of it is orally based; that of *smoodge* and *sploodge* is no exception. Pronounced "smōodge" and "splōodge," the words may contain elements taken from *smoke*

A selection of terms that have newly been coined, that have recently acquired new currency, or that have taken on new meanings, compiled by the executive editor of The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition.

and *ooze*. They can also be used as verbs, as in this example offered by a source who piloted an F-117 during the Gulf War: "Look at that stuff *sploooge* outta there."

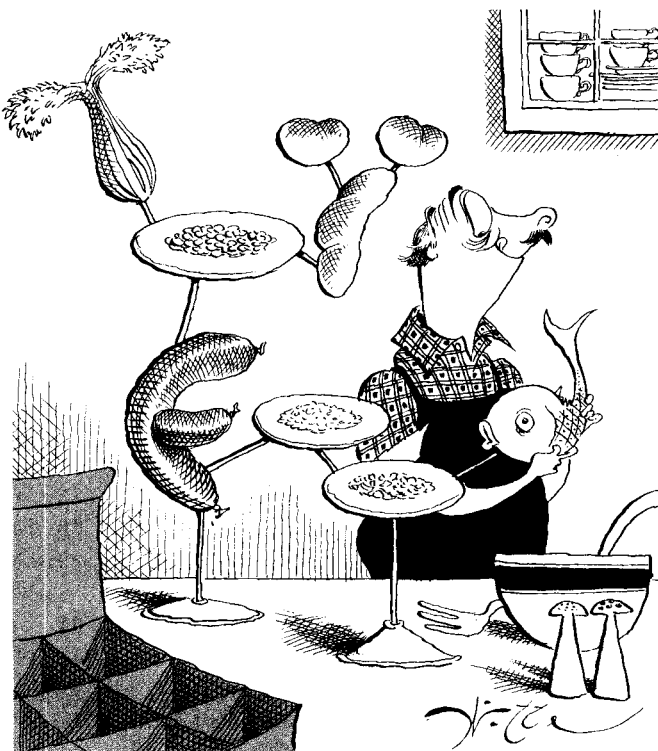
toy food *noun*, a dish whose ingredients are premeasured, premixed, packaged in numbered containers, and sold as a kit: "The cooking-by-the-number chefs . . . stir just enough and add just enough of a personal touch at the last minute to make it seem . . . their own creation. . . . 'It's truly *toy food*,' says Martin Friedman, the editor of *New Product News*. 'You get a little piece of this, a little of that, put it all together and make something, just like . . . an Erector Set'" (*Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: *Toy food*—a term Friedman chose for its echo of an old routine about airline food by the comedian Shelley Berman—is the successor to packaged mixes such as Hamburger Helper and Tuna Helper and, according to Friedman, the precursor of *meal kits* containing the ingredients for an entire dinner. Such a kit might, for example, contain everything needed to put together French onion soup, a caesar-salad dressing, the sauce for coq au vin, side dishes, and a dessert; the assembler need only buy a prepared salad and a chicken. *Toy food* is finding a market among those short on time or culinary experience but with relatively sophisticated tastes: typical assemblers are two-career couples, single parents, seniors tired

of cooking, and youngsters assigned to prepare the evening meal.

wall in the head *noun idiom*, the psychosocial barriers that continue to divide East Germans from West Germans: "Three years after German unification, every trace of the old wall has fallen. . . . But a '*Wall in the Head*' still runs through the town [of Kleinmachnow, where the Berlin Wall used to block every northbound street], separating Easterner from Westerner and neighbor from neighbor. Its persistence testifies to the difficulties of remaking any of Eastern Europe's societies, even under ideal circumstances" (*Dallas Morning News*).

BACKGROUND: The expression *wall in the head*—in German, *die Mauer im Kopf*—first surfaced in German newspapers in late 1990, about a year after the Berlin Wall came down. The disunity it describes has remained evident in opinion polls: for example, in September of 1992 only 22 percent of West Germans and 11 percent of Easterners said they felt "a common German identity" since the joining of the two nations. Among the most divisive issues: foreign deployment of the German armed forces, as in NATO (generally favored by Westerners and opposed by Easterners); the huge outlays of money, much of it borrowed, that the government is channeling to the East; high unemployment and crime rates in the East since reunification; and a law that allows Westerners to recover property seized by the Communists (more than a million such claims have been filed to date). The persistence of a *wall in the head* is perhaps not surprising: Germany has been united for little more than seventy-five of the past thousand years.



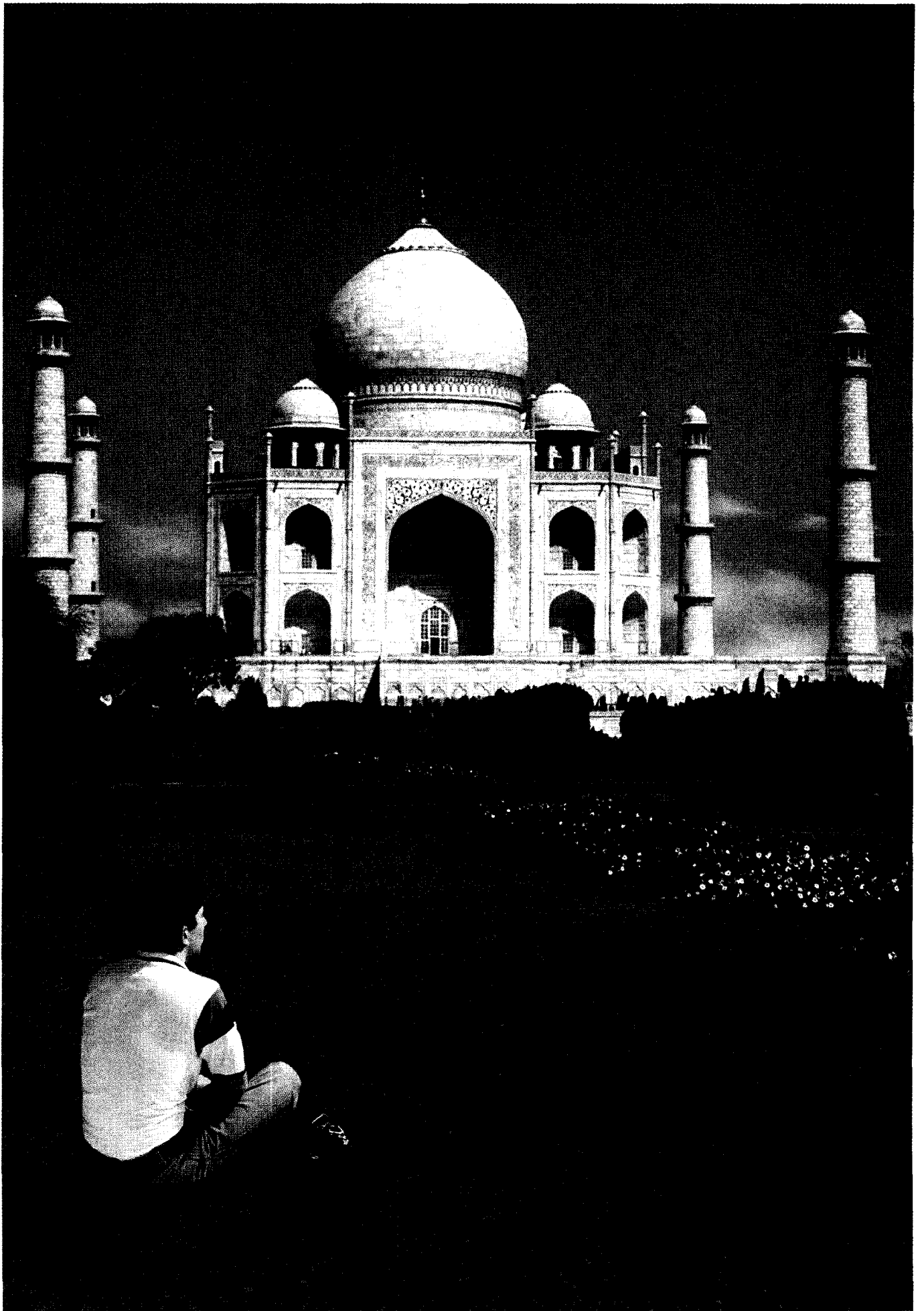
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